

**PRE-PROTO-IRANIANS OF AFGHANISTAN  
AS INITIATORS OF ŚAKTA TANTRISM:  
ON THE SCYTHIAN/SAKA AFFILIATION  
OF THE DĀSAS, NURISTANIS AND MAGADHANS**

BY

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**1. Introduction**

*1.1 Preliminary notice*

Professor C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky is a scholar striving at integrated understanding of wide-ranging historical processes, extending from Mesopotamia and Elam to Central Asia and the Indus Valley (cf. Lamberg-Karlovsky 1985; 1996) and even further, to the Altai. The present study has similar ambitions and deals with much the same area, although the approach is from the opposite direction, north to south. I am grateful to Dan Potts for the opportunity to present the paper in Karl's Festschrift. It extends and complements another recent essay of mine, 'From the dialects of Old Indo-Aryan to Proto-Indo-Aryan and Proto-Iranian', to appear in a volume in the memory of Sir Harold Bailey (Parpola in press a). To compensate for that wider framework which otherwise would be missing here, the main conclusions are summarized (with some further elaboration) below in section 1.2.

Some fundamental ideas elaborated here were presented for the first time in 1988 in a paper entitled 'The coming of the Aryans to Iran and India and the cultural and ethnic identity of the Dāsas' (Parpola 1988). Briefly stated, I suggested that the fortresses of the inimical Dāsas raided by Ṛgvedic Aryans in the Indo-Iranian borderlands have an archaeological counterpart in the Bronze Age 'temple-fort' of Dashly-3 in northern Afghanistan, and that those fortresses were the venue of the autumnal festival of the protoform of Durgā, the feline-escorted Hindu goddess of war and victory, who appears to be of ancient Near Eastern origin. The Dāsas, I argued, were the élite of the BMAC or 'Bactria and Margiana

Archaeological Complex', who had come from the Eurasiatic steppes and taken over the rule in this originally non-Indo-European speaking culture; the Dāsas were Aryan speakers, but represented a branch that had come to these parts earlier than the R̥gvedic Aryans; and it was through this BMAC culture abounding in weaponry that the Aryan speech first spread from Central Asia to Iran and to India, where they introduced the Śākta Tantric religion.

C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky and his student Fred Hiebert endorse the hypothesis that the BMAC was instrumental in the first spread of Aryan languages south of the Kopet Dagħ — Hindukush line; they point to the apparently unidirectional and explosive radiation of BMAC objects from southern Central Asia all over the Iranian plateau (see Fig. 1 and Hiebert and Lamberg-Karlovsky 1992; Hiebert 1995, 1998). (The hypothesis that the BMAC since its peak 'urban' period was ruled by Aryan speakers has further supporters in J. P. Mallory [1994-5: 377; 1998; Mallory & Mair 2000: 258ff.], Elizabeth Barber [1999], and, with a different chronological and conceptual frame, in the chief excavator of the BMAC, Viktor Sarianidi [1979, 1987, 1990, 1994, 1998a: 149ff.; 1998b; 2001]).

I thus have reasons to hope that Karl might be interested in a paper where the ideas presented in 1988 have been developed some steps further. In particular, I have endeavoured to fix more exactly the position of the Dāsas and the Nūristānī 'Kāfirs' within the Indo-Iranian linguistic and cultural (pre)history; I come forward here with the conclusion that the 'Kāfirs' are descended from the Dāsas who branched off from the Bronze Age ancestors of the Scythians/Sakas.

### 1.2. Emergence and branching of Proto-Aryan

The following overview summarizes my present understanding of how the Aryan or Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family came into being and how it dispersed to the areas where Indo-Iranian languages were spoken according to our earliest historical sources (for more details and references largely omitted here, see Parpola, in press, a; and Carpelan & Parpola 2001). In addition to archaeological and linguistic evidence, I base the reconstruction on the layering suggested by religion, especially in Indian sources. That is why, while particularizing the Aryan waves that successively seem to have taken the BMAC in control (and spread further to the Iranian Plateau and South Asia), I also specify the key deity or

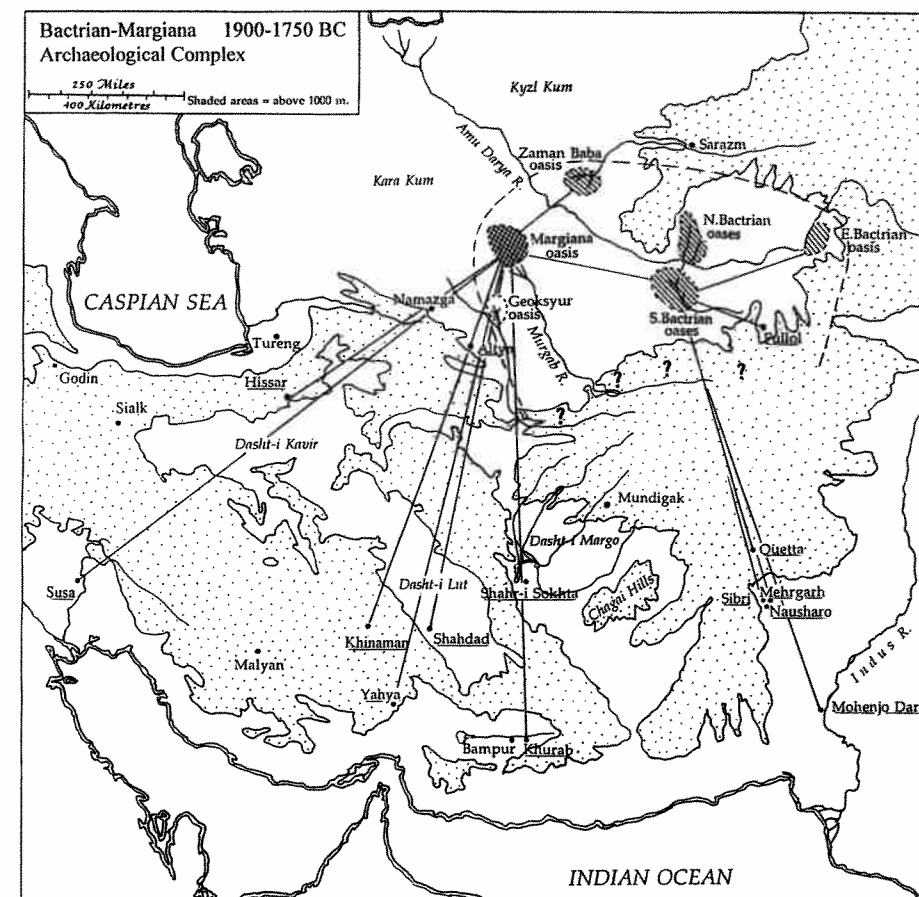


Fig. 1. Dispersal of the BMAC c. 1900-1750 BC (after Hiebert 1994: Fig. 10.8).

deities that I assume to have been the main object of worship (and often the model for the king) in the respective wave. Much of this is of course hypothetical, but to be brief, I do not always use explicit disclaimers.

#### 1.2.1. 4000-2800/2200 BC: Disintegration of Proto-Indo-European

With a fair amount of certainty, the Proto-Indo-European linguistic community can be equated with the Srednij-Stog-related Chalcolithic cultures of the Pontic steppes (cf. Mallory 1989; Anthony 1995; 1998). The first to leave this community were the ancestors of the Anatolian branch: I suggest they moved to Bulgaria as early as c. 4000 BC; after the arrival

there of another wave of Indo-European speakers c. 3300 BC, this branch continued to Anatolia c. 2700 BC. Around 3500 BC, provided with the new transport technology of ox-drawn wagons and carts, forefathers of the later Italo-Celtic, Germanic and Balto-Slavic branches spread from the Pontic steppes to northwestern Europe with the intrusive Corded Ware culture, brought about by the fusion of representatives of the early Pit Grave culture and the local cultures of eastern Central Europe. At the same time, or a little earlier (starting perhaps with the Chalcolithic Khvalynsk culture of the forest steppe of the Volga region, ancestral to Srednij Stog), the forefathers of later Tokharian speakers moved to southern Central Asia and to southern Siberia and western Mongolia where they formed the Afanas'ev culture.

Forefathers of the Greek, Armenian and Aryan speakers stayed in the old Proto-Indo-European homeland in the east European steppes, forming the Pit Grave culture (c. 3500-2800/2200 BC). The split into the preforms of Graeco-Armenian and Aryan branches came about sometime around 2800 BC with the divergence of the late Pit Grave culture into the Catacomb Grave culture of the Pontic steppes on the one hand and the Poltavka culture of the steppes between the Volga and the Ural rivers on the other.

#### 1.2.2. 2800/2200-1900 BC: The Proto-Aryan period

The Proto-Aryan language emerged c. 2800/2200 BC from the easternmost variants of the late Pit Grave culture, probably already slightly dialectally differentiated into preforms of the two main branches of Indo-Iranian. The 'Iranian' branch would seem to have its basis in the Poltavka culture of the Lower Volga steppes (cf. section 1.2.3).

The 'Indo-Aryan' branch seems to have started with the Abashevo culture (cf. Pryakhin & Khalikov 1987), the more northerly forest-steppe neighbour of the Poltavka culture. The Abashevo culture expanded from the forest-steppe of the Don region eastwards to the forest steppe of Mid-Volga and Kama; this area had formerly belonged to the late Proto-Uralic (Proto-Finno-Ugric) speaking Volosovo culture, and then been overlaid by the linguistically originally Proto-Baltic but eventually Uralized Fat'yanovo culture. The Abashevo culture was in all likelihood bilingual: the ruling élite spoke Pre-Proto-Indo-Aryan while the common people spoke late Proto-Uralic, and the later absorption of the ruling class left a number of early Aryan loanwords in the Volgaic, Permic and Ugric languages. A

newly identified loanword, reconstructable as *\*šišṭá* 'beeswax' in Volgaic and Permic, has a counterpart in Sanskrit (*madhu-*)*śiṣṭa-* 'beeswax', but in no Iranian language; it is the past participle of the verb *śiṣ-* 'to remain, be left over', which too is only known from Indo-Aryan (and practically, only from the Atharvaveda onwards). From the Kama Valley, the Abashevo culture crossed the Urals and expanded further to the southern Urals (cf. Carpelan & Parpola 2001).

The cattle-breeding Poltavka people of the grass steppe and the Abashevo people of the northern forest steppe, skilled in metallurgy, met in the southern Urals. These two cultures were the main components that created the powerful Sintashta-Arkaim culture in this area phenomenally rich in copper ores. The Sintashta-Arkaim culture, which seems to represent the last phase of Proto-Aryan, had town-like ceremonial centres provided with circular, concentric walls (see Fig. 20; Zdanovich 1995, 1997).

By c. 2000 BC, the Sintashta-Arkaim culture appears to have developed the horse-drawn spoke-wheeled chariot, a major technological innovation that quickly spread both east and west as well as south (cf. Gening et al. 1992; Anthony and Vinogradov 1995; Kuz'mina 1994b). As a status symbol buried with its aristocratic owner, it replaced the ox-cart of the Pit Graves. The transition involves a plank-wheeled, one-man chariot drawn at first by the ox (found in the Catacomb Grave culture contemporaneous with Poltavka, cf. Fig. 2).

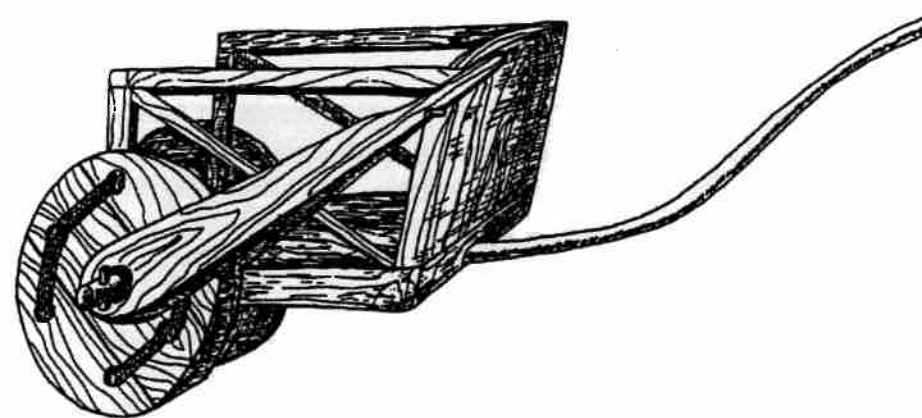


Fig. 2. Reconstruction of a Catacomb Grave chariot from grave 27 of barrow 11 at the village of Marievka on the Dnieper, Zaporozhe region, Ukraine (after Klochko and Pustovalov 1994: Fig. 6).

In the Sintashta-Arkaim culture this plank-wheel chariot was yoked to the horse (Fig. 3), and the wheels then made lighter (Fig. 4). Later the

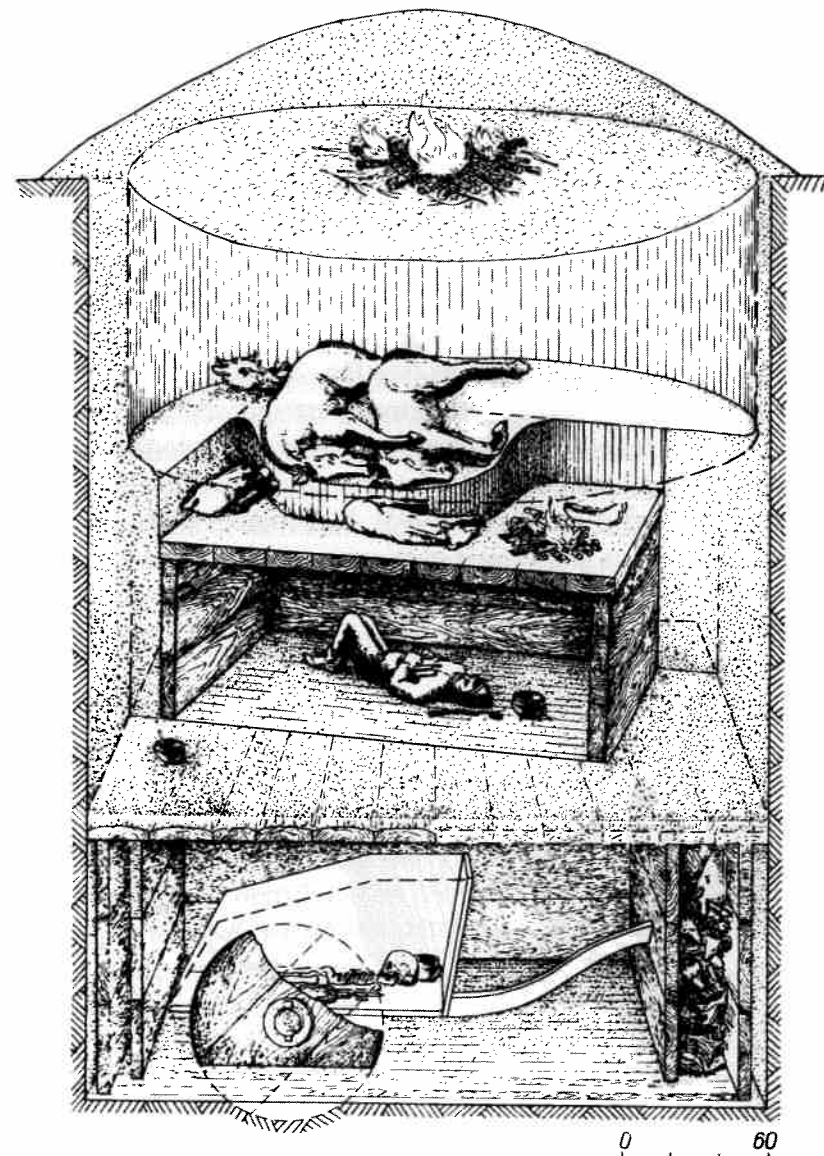


Fig. 3. Aristocratic grave at Sintashta, the warrior lying on the plank-wheel chariot at bottom, and two horses and their groom buried on a higher level (after Gening et al. 1992/I: Fig. 72).

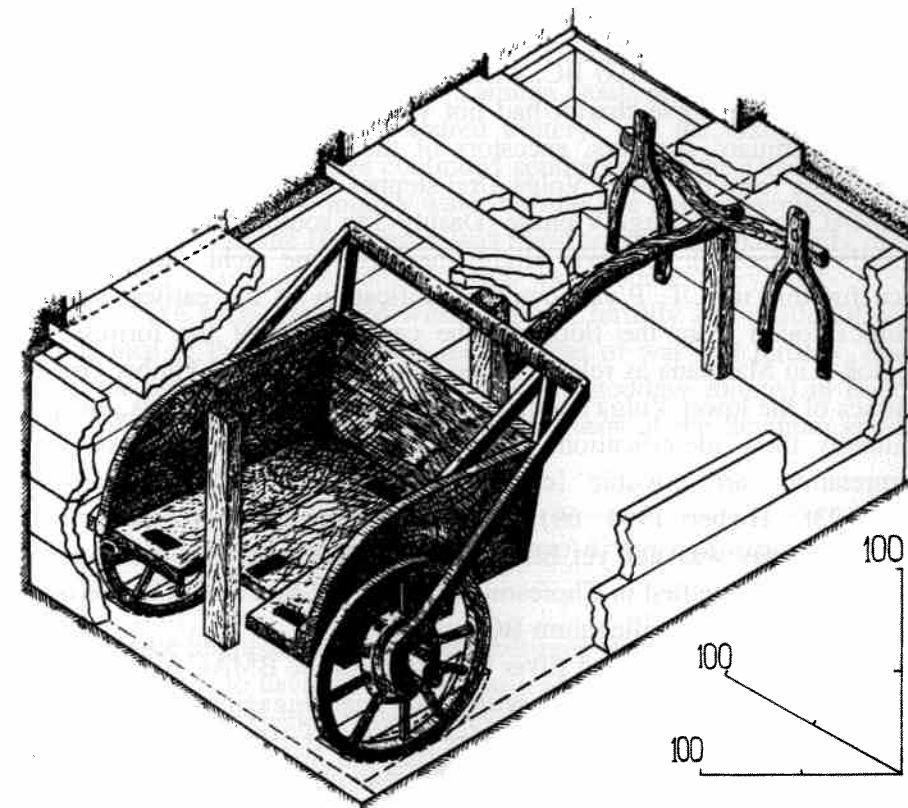


Fig. 4. Spoke-wheeled chariot from a grave at Sintashta (after Gening et al. 1992/I: Fig. 116).

chariot was made broader to accommodate the two-man team of charioteer and car-fighter. The importance of the horse-drawn chariot was reflected in the religion and social structure, where divine horsemen assumed importance. The 'twin sons of Heaven' are attested in the mythology of the Greeks, Balts and Aryans and associated with dual kingship (cf. Parpola, in press b).

The original Proto-Indo-European cultic drink *\*medhu* 'mead', made of honey and water, appears to have continued in use in the forest-steppe rich in honey-trees; in Vedic religion honey was associated with the cult of *Aśvins*, the charioteer gods. In the grass steppe, however, it appears that 'wine' started being used by the Proto-Greeks as well as by Proto-Iranians, but was still called *\*medhu*.

*First wave of BMAC Aryans: Pre-Proto-Iranian Dāsas*

It seems to me that c. 2100 BC, when the Sintashta-Arkaim culture was emerging but the horse-chariot had not yet been developed, a group of 'Pre-Proto-Iranian' speakers, ancestors of the Dāsas, came to southern Central Asia from the lower Volga-Ural steppes and took over the rule of the BMAC in its Namazga V phase (Dashly-3 in southern Bactria, Sapalli in northern Bactria). However slight, there is some archaeological evidence for this in L.T. P'yankova's identification of the earliest steppe ceramics found from the floors of the central part of the fortress of Togolok 1 in Margiana as related to the Poltavka and early Timber Grave ceramics of the lower Volga and the northern Caspian Sea regions, though admittedly these identifications are not certain and other (Andronovo) interpretations are possible (cf. P'yankova 1993: 115-117; Parpola 1998a:123f.; Hiebert 1994: 69). The route southwards from the Volga-Caspian steppes was not yet blocked by the Tazabag'yab Andronovo people who were settled in Choresmia south of the Aral Sea in the second quarter of the second millennium BC.

The early 'urban' gold and silver wine cups of the BMAC (cf. Lyonnet 1997: 24) show men tilling earth with plough and engaging in aristocratic pastimes of wine-drinking, boar-hunting (cf. Amiet 1986: Figs. 201-202) and racing with ox-drawn wagons and one-man chariots (Fig. 5).

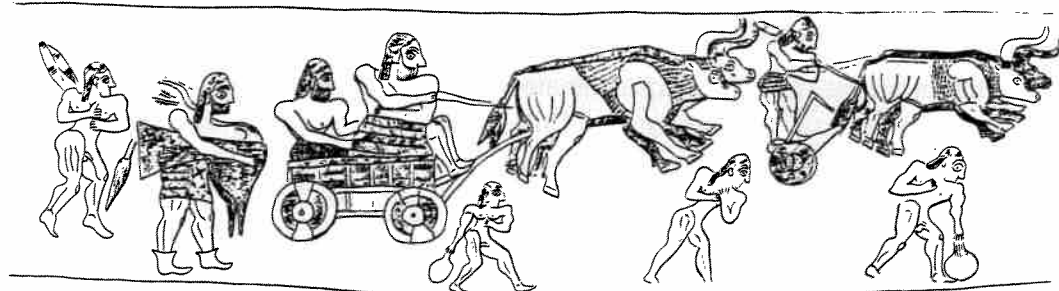


Fig. 5. Motifs on a silver drinking vessel of the BMAC, showing i. a. race with an ox-drawn, one-man chariot (after Amiet 1989: Fig. 6).

I will argue below (in section 2.3) that this earliest wave of BMAC Aryans infiltrated the élite of the Indus Civilization as well, some proceeding as far east as the Ganges-Yamuna Doab, where their presence is represented by the 'Ochre Coloured Pottery' and the Gangetic Copper Hoards; some seem to have continued southwards to the Deccan as well. In the Indus Valley, the mighty water buffalo, the animal symbolizing the chief male deity of the Harappans, was transferred to the main deity of this Aryan wave, Yama alias Samvara; this was probably easy, as both gods seem to have been connected with kingship, fertility and death. Of equal importance in the pantheon was the goddess of war and fertility, essentially the ancient Near Eastern lion escorted goddess adopted in Bactria, but probably also incorporating the predecessor of the Scythian goddess Tabiti.

*1.2.3. 1900-1700 BC: Bifurcation of Proto-Aryan and expansion of the two branches*

The decisive linguistic differentiation between the Indo-Aryan and Iranian branches seems to have taken place only after c. 1900 BC, when the late Poltavka culture expanded northwards and westwards from the steppes of the lower Volga to form the Early Timber Grave culture. Variants of the Early Timber Grave culture thus came to occupy areas where the preforms of Balto-Slavic and Armenian were spoken (the latter in the Mnogovalikovaya culture of Ukraine in the former area of the Catacomb Grave culture, cf. Berezanskaya 1986; Klochko 1994: 163f), and these languages exerted a strong substratum influence upon 'Pre-Proto-Iranian', causing the deaspiration of aspirated stops and the change  $s > h$ . These changes should have started operating in Proto-Iranian by c. 1500 BC when it began to spread to Central Asia and further east and south (section 1.2.5). The Pozdnyakovo variant of the Early Timber Grave culture in the Volga-Oka region, along with the late Abashevo culture, influenced the late Fat'yano culture immediately to its north; the resulting Net Ware alias Textile Ceramic culture spread widely to Finland and Karelia. It is the most likely source of the numerous early Aryan loanwords found exclusively in the northwesternmost Uralic languages, Finnic and Saami (on these loanwords, see Koivulehto 2001).

In the eastern forest-steppes, the Abashevo culture was succeeded by the Sejma-Turbino 'transcultural phenomenon', after part of the Abashevo



population had expanded from the Urals further east to the Sayan mountains, another important source of metal. Like the Abashevo culture, the Sejma-Turbino population that disseminated weapons of the Abashevo and Sintashta-Arkaim type between Siberia and Finland, seems to have consisted of both 'Proto-Indo-Aryan' and Uralic speakers, the latter being ancestors of the Samoyeds in Siberia (Carpelan & Parpola 2001). In the grass steppe, the eastwards (to Kazakhstan and Siberia) and southwards (to Central Asia) moving offshoots of the Sintashta-Arkaim culture formed the Andronovo cultural complex (cf. Avanesova 1991; Kuz'mina 1994a), which almost certainly spoke preforms of 'Indo-Aryan'.

*Second wave of BMAC Aryans: 'Atharvavedic' Proto-Indo-Aryans*

A second, Proto-Indo-Aryan wave of Aryans replaced the Pre-Proto-Iranians as the rulers of the BMAC c. 1900 BC. A grave at Zardcha Khalifa near the site of Sarazm in Tajikistan has yielded typical Sapalli-Dzharkutan phase BMAC pottery and other artefacts along with a horse-topped bronze pin, horse-bits of bronze and cheek-pieces of bone identical in shape with the psalia of Sintashta-Arkaim (cf. Fig. 6) (Bobomulloev 1997; cf. Sarianidi 2001: 434).

Ceramics of the early Novo-Petrovka variant of the Andronovo culture (mainly known from northern Kazakhstan) have been found elsewhere in Tajikistan, namely, at the necropolis of Dzharkutan and at the metallurgists' settlement Tugai (Masson 1999; Kuz'mina 1999). Bones of camel, donkey and domesticated horse have now been securely identified in BMAC contexts in Margiana (Hiebert 1994; Sarianidi, 1998a; 2001: 434) and in northern Bactria (cf. Askarov 1993: 69). The horse and the camel are represented in the beautiful weapon-sceptres of the BMAC and as new motifs on a number of stamp and cylinder seals from Margiana (cf. Sarianidi 1998b: 47 and nos. 1395, 1397-99, 1401, 1441-42, 1444-45, 1482). Tepe Hissar IIIB in northern Iran near the Caspian Sea, where the BMAC expanded c. 1900 BC, has yielded a locally made alabaster seal showing a horse-drawn chariot with two plank wheels, as well as metal trumpets probably used in chariot warfare (cf. Ghirshman 1977: 10-18, 31) and with parallels in Bactria-Margiana. The twin charioteer gods, the *Aśvins/Nāsatyas*, are likely to have been initially most important in the Proto-Indo-Aryan pantheon at this stage.

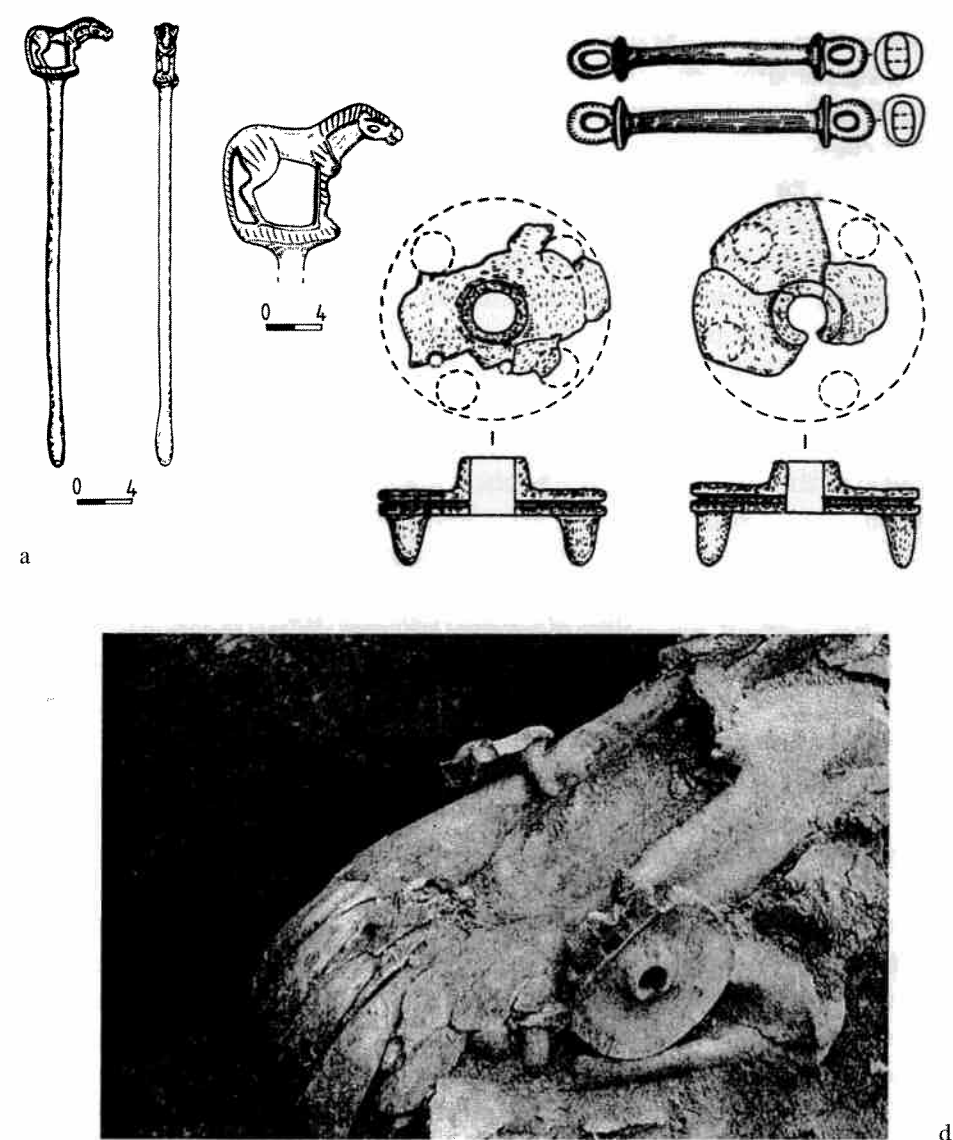


Fig. 6. A horse-topped bronze pin (a), bronze horse-bits (b), and cheek-pieces made of bone (c) from a grave at Zardcha Khalifa near Sarazm in Tajikistan (after Bobomulloev 1997: Abb. 3.14 (a); Abb. 3.12-13 (b) and Abb. 4.1-2 (c)). Horse skull with cheek-pieces *in situ* from Sintashta, monument SM, grave 11 (d) (after Gening et al. 1992/I: Photo 22).

Assyrian merchants operating from Anatolia and Syria carried out a flourishing tin trade with Afghanistan between 1920-1850 BC. This economic intercourse initiated a BMAC contact with northern Syria that led to the adoption of numerous motifs of Syrian and Egyptian origin in the BMAC glyptics and other arts (cf. Amiet 1986: 198; Collon 1987: 41ff, 142); the strong Egyptian influence upon Syria c. 1800 BC resulted from the Hyksos invasions to lower Egypt (in which the BMAC people may have been involved). Viktor Sarianidi (2001) records important architectural influences of Syria upon the BMAC as well. On the other hand, the two-humped Bactrian camel is depicted on a Syrian seal c. 1800 BC. The Assyrian contacts probably had a deep effect not only on the BMAC art but on the BMAC religion as well. It seems likely to me that the Proto-Indo-Aryans ruling the BMAC at this time adopted from the Assyrians the concept of abstract divinities representing social powers: these gods (the Ādityas of the Veda), including Mitra, Varuṇa, Aryaman and others, may already have been conceived (as later in the Neo-Assyrian [cf. S. Parpola 1993] and Zarathustran religions) as attributes of a supreme lord, whose Aryan name *Asura* was perhaps chosen on account of its resemblance to *Aššur*, the name of the main god of the Assyrians. The new deities Mitra and Varuṇa might be transformations of the Aśvins/Nāsatyas, replacing them as the divine models of dual kingship (the king and his house priest in the Atharvaveda).

Even though the connection is not quite clear, I assume that this earliest 'Proto-Indo-Aryan' layer of the BMAC aristocracy spread to northwestern South Asia as well, eventually forming the ruling élite of the 'Cemetery H' culture (c. 1900-1300 BC) that succeeded the Indus Civilization in the Indus Valley. The depiction of the horse on a BMAC type seal at Somnath/Prabhas Patan in Gujarat (CISI I: 359) and on a Jhukar period seal at Chanhu-daro in Sind (Mackay 1943: pl. 50: 10a) is suggestive, likewise the BMAC-affinity of the Jhukar seals (cf. Winkelmann 1998: 3-4). The origins of the cremation burial in Cemetery H is a problem, however; in the Eurasiatic steppe, the origins of cremation have been traced to the Late Pit Grave and Poltavka cultures of the Volga steppes (cf. Avanesova 1997: 166). In any case, the Cemetery H culture seems to have spoken Old Indo-Aryan of the 'Atharvavedic' variety (the main source of epic and classical Sanskrit), when the main group of Ṛgvedic Aryans speaking a different dialect entered the Panjab c. 1400 BC (cf. Parpola, in press a).

#### 1.2.4. 1750-1500 BC: Early Ṛgvedic tribes and Mitanni Aryans

##### *Third wave of BMAC Aryans: Ṛgvedic Proto-Indo-Aryans*

The arrival of a second wave of Proto-Indo-Aryans related to the Tazabag'yab and Fedorovo variants of the Andronovo culture, attested by the presence of the respective ceramics, initiated the impoverished late period of the BMAC (cf. Biscione 1977; Hiebert 1994), with the Takhir-baj phase in Margiana and the successive Kuzali/Mollali/Bustan phases in northern Bactria. The practice of disposing of the dead by cremation started becoming current in northern Bactria after the arrival of Fedorovo people. As earlier, part of the newcomers remained pastoral nomads living in symbiosis with the settled agriculturalists of the BMAC (Vakhsh and Bishkent cultures; cf. Hiebert 1994; Lyonnet 1997; Avanesova 1995; 1997).

These third wave Aryans fused with their predecessors, and the resulting mixture extended further west, taking over the rule in the Mitanni kingdom of Syria (on the Mitanni Aryans, see Mayrhofer 1966; 1974). The same stock also came to South Asia via Swāt where they formed the early Ghālegay IV phase of the 'Gandhāra Grave culture', which possessed the domesticated horse; Sarianidi (2001: 432f.) notes several features including the ceramic which clearly connect the Gandhāra Grave culture of Swāt with the late phase of the BMAC. This was the first wave of Ṛgvedic Aryans (including the tribes of Yadus and Turvaśas), represented by the Kāṇva poets of the 8th and 1st books of the Ṛgveda (the only ones with proper names ending in *-atithi* with parallels in Mitanni Aryan, cf. Pinault 1998). The Tazabag'yab, Bishkent, Bustan and Swāt burials share the practice of interring males on their right sides and females on their left, while at Bishkent the male and female graves are additionally distinguished by the presence of square and circular hearths respectively, comparable to the square *āhavanīya* and circular *garhāpatya* fireplaces of the Vedic ritual (cf. Mallory and Mair 2000: 264f.).

The Mitanni and Vedic texts attest to a religious syncretism, in which the Ādityas seem to represent the earlier Indo-Aryan layer of the BMAC, while the Aśvins/Nāsatyas, even if transformed into Mitra and Varuṇa, may have survived besides them or may have been reintroduced. Analysis of the Vedic texts suggests that the principal new element introduced by the last wave of Proto-Indo-Aryans to come to southern Central Asia was the worship of Indra with the drink called *\*Sauma* (whence Vedic *Soma*



and Avestan *Haoma*) and in all likelihood prepared out of plants of the genus *Ephedra* (cf. Falk 1989; Nyberg 1995). Cultic vessels containing remnants of *Ephedra* have been found from the BMAC sites of Gonur and Togolok 21 in Margiana (see Meyer-Melikyan in Sarianidi 1998a: 176-179) in the last period of 'urban' occupation (cf. Hiebert 1994: 124-130).

*Ephedra* twigs bundled into little bags accompanied into the grave the famous mummies of the early Sinkiang culture of Loulan alias Qäwrighul (c. 2000-1550 BC). This oasis culture is supposed by Elizabeth Barber to have been founded by BMAC colonists (1999: 148-167). Additional evidence for this (not mentioned by Barber) is the compartmented metal seal discovered by Sir Aurel Stein at Kucha in the Tarim Basin, which has a close parallel at Gonur-1 in Margiana and at Shahdad in Kerman, Iran (cf. Baghestani 1997: 8, 146 and 365f, no. 606). That the BMAC people indeed travelled far to the east along the later Silk Road is confirmed by the numerous compartmented metal seals with distinctive BMAC motifs found in the Ordos region of China (cf. Amiet 1986: 192, 199, 320, Figs. 187-188; Biscione 1985; Baghestani 1997: 6-8, 145f, 400-403).

#### 1.2.5. 1500-1200 BC: Proto-Iranians in Central Asia and their impact

The fourth wave of Aryans to come to southern Central Asia were the 'Proto-Iranians' of the classical Timber Grave culture of eastern Europe with their cordon-appliqué pottery (*valikovaya keramika*). As the 'Proto-Iranians' spread all over the Eurasiatic steppes, they overlaid and assimilated the Andronovo cultures, and hence no more 'Indo-Aryan' speakers came to Central Asia from the northern steppes. The 'Proto-Iranians' were mounted nomads and replaced chariotry with riding. In Central Asia part of them (the Sakas of Ferghana) remained nomads, and continued with inhumation burials; part of them became sedentary agriculturalists after taking over the BMAC culture, which was now transformed into the Yaz I culture with predominantly hand-made pottery and probably exposure burial.

A large part of the 'Proto-Indo-Aryans' of Central Asia and 'Greater Iran' undoubtedly remained in their former habitats (the wheel-made BMAC pottery continued beside the hand-made ware in Yaz I culture), eventually shifting language and becoming Iranian speakers. They continued the \*Sauma/Haoma cult and the worship of such 'Indo-Aryan' deities as Indra and the Nāsatyas. The latter were later condemned by Zarathuštra,

who may have lived around 800 BC in southern Central Asia and been originally a Median prince educated by the Assyrians and initiated by them into the 'monotheism' of Aššur. His reform seems to have been an attempt to re-introduce the Assyrian-like religion of abstract deities.

The coming of the Iranians, however, made part of the 'Proto-Indo-Aryans' of Central Asia and 'Greater Iran' move to South Asia. This is the second wave of Ṛgvedic Aryans, the Pūru and Bharata tribes, whose history is chiefly reflected in the main bulk of Ṛgvedic hymns, those of the 'family' books 2-7. They came via Swāt (initiating there the Ghālegay V phase of the Gandhāra Grave culture, c. 1400-800 BC), partly from northern Iran, partly from Seistan, crossing over the highlands of Afghanistan and fighting there with the Dāsas (see sections 3.1-2). In Swāt and the Panjab the newcomers fused with the earlier wave of Ṛgvedic Aryans and with the Atharvavedins, which led to the creation of the classical Śrauta ritual, along with the corpus of early Vedic literature. This literature then grew with the gradual expansion of the Vedic culture.

#### 1.2.6. 1200-800 BC: Early Iron Age and new waves of Iranians

Iron was brought to southern Central Asia towards the end of the Yaz I period (c. 1100 BC) by a later wave of Iranians, coming perhaps from the Pontic steppe: their name \*Pārśva may come from their weapon, \*par(a)śú 'battle-axe', which word is related to Greek πέλεκος 'battle axe'. These Iranians continued partly to western Iran (the Medians and Persians), partly stayed in the Indo-Iranian borderlands (the Pathans) and partly went to India (the rulers of the Kuru dynasty). In South Asia, the relatively small numbers of immigrating Iranian speakers could not preserve their original language, but quickly adopted the local speech.

The invasion of the Scythians over the Caucasus in the 8th century BC probably did not stop in Iran. Part of the Scythians seem to have continued through Baluchistan to India, bringing there the 'megalithic culture' and perhaps, as the white-skinned 'Pāṇḍavas', polyandry as well, and expanded then to Sri Lanka and the Deccan (cf. Parpola, in press c). Aryan invasions to South Asia continued hereafter wave after wave, but the immigrants now invariably belonged to the 'Iranian' branch: the Achaemenid Persians, Kuṣāṇas, Sakas, and Pahlavas. In the protohistory of South India such 'Iranian' immigrants seem to have played an important but so far scarcely recognized role: the Toda tribe of the Nilagiris, for example,

seems to descend from Saka horsemen who around AD 400 married local Dravidian-speaking women, and the Pallava dynasty of the Tamils may have been founded by Pahlava warriors.

## 2. Basic theses and research strategy

### 2.1. *The Nuristani languages and the 'Kāfir' religion*

The speakers of the Nuristani languages were formerly called 'Kāfirs' ('infidels'). They retained their ancient tribal religion until 1896, when the Afghans forcibly converted them to the faith of Muhammad; after this event, Kāfiristān became Nūristān, 'Country of the Light (of Islam)'. Situated in the mountain valleys of the Kunar river and its tributaries in north-eastern Afghanistan, this is one of the most inaccessible refuge areas in the Indo-Iranian borderlands. In their relative isolation the conservative 'Kāfirs' long preserved linguistic, cultural and religious traditions that are indeed very archaic, though naturally various historical developments have taken place.

What makes these traditions particularly valuable is the fact that they are likely to represent early Aryan heritage in the form it was about to be introduced to South Asia, but before it actually came into contact with the local South Asian traditions of the Indus Valley and mixed with them. Yet the ancestors of the 'Kāfirs' are likely to have been in contact with the earlier inhabitants of Central Asia, particularly Bactria and Margiana; neither has Nūristān been quite hermetically sealed off from contact with South Asia. Nevertheless, the Kāfir traditions can be expected to render great help in attempts to sort out the various components in such probably very syncretistic systems as the Veda and Hinduism. All along, this has been fully realized by Karl Jettmar, who has carefully assembled all available information of the 'Kāfir' religion (cf. Jettmar 1975; 1986: 129-147).

#### 2.1.1. *The position of the Nuristani languages*

The debate concerning the precise linguistic position of the Nuristani languages (Kati, Prasun, Waigali and Ashkun) continues. They have been considered as a 'third branch' of Indo-Iranian, which cannot be classified as Indo-Aryan nor Iranian. Various models have been proposed to explain their formation, but no generally accepted conclusion has been reached. I will not detail the linguistic data nor the attempts at their explanation: this

has been admirably done by David Nelson (1986), and a useful summary has recently been given by Almut Degener (in press). Here I simply state my own conclusion: in my opinion, the Nuristani languages are a relict of 'Pre-Proto-Iranian', as their ancestor goes back to the 'Iranian' branch but left it so early that it had not yet reached the stage of Proto-Iranian, by which I mean the proto-language from which all the other Iranian languages are derived.

The Nuristani languages are unique in having preserved, in a number of etyma, the dental affricate \**c* [*ts*] now reconstructed as the Proto-Iranian development of the Proto-Indo-European palato-velar stop \**k*' after it had first changed into the Proto-Aryan palatal affricate \**c*' [*tʃ*], which in Proto-Indo-Aryan developed into the palatal sibilant *s*' (cf. Nelson 1986: 70-72, 104-107; Mayrhofer 1989: 4, 6). The Nuristani deaspiration of voiced aspirates is another important isogloss with the Iranian languages; the deaspiration of the voiceless aspirates is likely to be a later development, since these have become fricatives in Iranian, but voiceless stops in Nuristani (cf. Nelson 1986: 105-108; Mayrhofer 1989: 6, 8). On the other hand, the isoglosses which separate Nuristani from Iranian and connect it with Indo-Aryan can be explained simply as retentions of Proto-Aryan features, due to the separation of Nuristani from Pre-Proto-Iranian before the subsequent specifically Iranian developments had taken place, notably the change \**s* > *h* (mainly intervocally and word-initially before a vowel) and the change of voiceless aspirates into fricatives. Like the 'Atharvavedic' which probably was the first branch of Old Indo-Aryan to have reached South Asia (cf. above and Parpola in press a), Nuristani has retained the Proto-Indo-European \**l*, traces of which are found also in several peripheral Iranian languages like the Ossetic, while in 'R̥gvedic Indo-Aryan', Avestan and Old Persian it has merged with Proto-Indo-European \**r* (cf. Nelson 1986: 91-93; Mayrhofer 1989: 10).

### 2.2. *Kāfirs and Dāsas*

Kāfiristān/Nūristān consists of narrow valleys where villages are built on steep forested mountain ridges. Their houses built with timber and ornamented with exquisite wood carvings represent a tradition that is unique in Afghanistan (cf. Edelberg 1984; Szabo and Barfield 1991: 148-151, 228-243; Fig. 7). It could well continue the original Proto-Aryan building traditions represented by the simple square log houses of the Volga



Fig. 7. Distribution of flat-roofed houses with timber and stone walls in Afghanistan in Nūristān alone (after Szabo and Barfield 1991: 148).

steppes in the Bronze Age, as suggested by the Timber Graves and their predecessors.

Reference was made above (section 1.2.2) to the provisional identification of late Poltavka ceramics in Margiana. The 'Kāfirs' seem to represent direct descendants of one part of this early (c. 2100 BC) wave of 'Pre-Proto-Iranians', who settled in the Kunar river valley (which perhaps was unoccupied at that time — this remains to be verified by archaeological excavations), without mixing with the previous population of Afghanistan.

Their language and religion, therefore, should more or less reflect the tradition of the late Poltavka culture people of the Volga-Ural steppes.

Another part of this same wave seems to have taken over the rule of the BMAC culture, to be replaced as its élite a little later by the first wave of 'Proto-Indo-Aryans' in Central Asia. In some less accessible areas, especially in the highlands of Afghanistan south of Nuristan, the 'Pre-Proto-Iranians' seem to have remained in power until about 1400 BC. In the sequel, I am arguing that they are the Dāsas and Paṇis whose fortresses were stormed by the Ṛgvedic king Divodāsa (section 3.1). The affinity of the Dāsas with the Kāfirs and the Iranian branch is revealed by the etymology of the few words which with certainty can be associated with them, especially their ethnic names Dāsa (section 2.2.1) and Paṇi (section 3.1) and the name of their principal chief or deity Śambara (section 3.5.1). On the other hand, the study of these names and associated Vedic and Avestan passages will strongly suggest a connection with the BMAC.

### 2.2.1. The ethnic name Dāsa: evidence for 'Scythian/Saka' affinity

Sten Konow (1912) was the first to connect Sanskrit *dāsa-* and its cognates with Khotanese Saka *daha-* 'man'. Sir Harold Bailey (1960) started his discussion of this etymology from Ṛgveda 6,21,11, which speaks of the gods 'who made Mānu the successor to Dāsa' (*yé mānuṃ cakrūr ūparam dāsāya*). (The meaning of *ūparam* here is not certain. Bailey's 'successor' corresponds to Geldner's 'Nachfolger', but Geldner offers as alternative translations 'Nebenbuhler' or 'überlegen'; 'neighbour[ing]' seems a further possibility). This is the only occurrence of the word *dāsa-* and it appears to denote the ancestor of the Dāsas (thus Geldner 1951/II: 120), while Mānu is the mythical ancestor of the Vedic Aryans. Sir Harold pointed out that 'just as *mānu-* was known for "man", the word *dāsa-* could mean "man" and that this Vedic *dāsa-* actually is 'identical in original form with Iran[ian] Khot[anese] *daha-* "man"' (Bailey 1960: 113).

In Khotanese there is no doubt about the meaning. The word *daha-* is used in the sense 'man, male person' to render Sanskrit *puruṣa-* and *nara*, contrasting with *strīyā-* 'woman, female' and in compounds and derivatives in the sense of 'manliness, virility, bravery' (Bailey 1960: 107). These meanings have a counterpart in the nearby Waxi, likewise an East Iranian language, where *ḍay* means 'man, male person, human being'; it is derived from older *\*ḍaha-* (Steblin-Kamenskij 1999: 25, 162f.).

Bailey (1960: 109f.) further noted that 'words meaning "man" or "hero" have at times given ethnic names by which they have become known outside their own group' — from the copious examples cited by Bailey I mention here only *ba-ntu* meaning 'men'. 'Hence possibly the Khot[anese] *daha-* "man, male" and the ethnic name *Dahā* are the same word'. This hypothesis has been found quite plausible (cf. de Blois 1987).

It seems significant that, apart from some dialects of Romani (cf. Serbian Romani *das* 'man', Bailey 1960: 113f), which on its way to the west has passed through Afghanistan, no other Aryan language except Khotanese Saka and Waxī has preserved the word *\*dasa* with the positive meaning 'man' that is most likely the original sense of the ethnic name *Daha-/Dāsa-*. A possible exception is Ossetic (where *lāg* 'man' may come from older Alanian *\*dahaka-*, cf. Bailey 1960:108f), a Saka language spoken in northern Caucasus and closest to the Khotanese-Waxī group (Ossetic and Khotanese Saka share some seventy vocabulary entries, cf. Bailey 1982: 56). Bailey (1960: 108, n. 2) has also drawn attention to the remarkable fact that 'Khotanese and Waxī alone of East Iranian dialects have kept older *śv* and *sp* distinct' (cf. also Emmerick 1989: 216). Skjærvø (1995: 159) notes that 'Middle Iranian Khotanese and modern Wakhi... [are] distinguished from Avestan and Old Persian, as well as all other known Iranian languages in several important respect[s]... Clearly the Khotanese and the Wakhis are descendants of Scythian tribes of eastern central Asia, maybe even of the Scythians with pointed caps'. If the Iranian branch came into being in the East European steppes, as seems likely (see section 1.2.3), these dialects are likely to have occupied the southernmost position in the Volga-Ural steppe north of the Caspian Sea, which placement would have made them the vanguard in a movement southwards to Central Asia; this is suggested by their relationship with Ossetic, spoken in the Caucasus along the route southwards to the ancient Near East followed by the Scythians in the 8th century BC, as well as their own archaic features.

In Sanskrit *dāsā-* usually means 'slave'; while this meaning is found four times in the R̥gveda (1,92,8; 7,86,7; 8,56,3; 10,62,10), the word there mostly denotes a member of an inimical tribe or an inimical demon and only these last-mentioned meanings are involved in the corresponding adjective or derived noun *dāsa-* (cf. Grassmann 1996: 598f). There are many parallels to the semantic development obviously involved, namely

the ethnic name of people taken as war-captives coming to mean 'slave': cf. Volga-Finnic *\*orja /orya/* 'slave' from Arya-/Ārya- (Parpola 1988: 220; the semantic development assumed by Joki 1973: 297 is unlikely), or English *slave* via French and late Latin from Greek ἑσκλαβήνος 'Slav taken as war-captive; slave'. Sanskrit *Dāsa-* is thus originally an ethnic name, and, as a derivative of *Dāsa-* '(first) man', corresponds to the people called in Old Persian *Dahā*, in Greek Δάαι, Δᾶαι, Δάοι (Strabo), or Δάσαι (Stephan of Byzantium, probably trying to render Iranian *Daha-* in Latin *Dahae*); the Iranian, Greek and Latin sources place these people in or around Bactria and Margiana, and associate them with Saka tribes (cf. Vogelsang 1987; Parpola 1988: 220).

Greek δοῦλος 'slave' from Mycenaean *do-e-ro* may stand for *\*dóh-ελος* from *\*dóσελος* (cf. also Szemerényi 1980: 43, n. 123; Watkins 1995: 312). It may likewise go back to the ethnic name taken as war-captives and enslaved by the Pre-Proto-Greeks, and thus represent an earlier variant of *Dasa*. The Greek language appears to have developed from the Late Proto-Indo European dialect spoken on the Pontic steppes by the carriers of the Catacomb Grave culture, neighbours of the Poltavka culture of the Volga steppes whose carriers appear to have been the earliest Aryan speakers (see section 1.2.1). Gernot Windfuhr (1999: 330-332) derives this etymon from the Proto-Indo-European root *\*deh₂-* 'to divide' (cf. Pokorny 1959: 175-179; LIV: 87), connecting Iranian *dahyu-* 'division of land' and Indo-Aryan *dasyu-* '(inimical) tribe' with Greek δῆμος, and Iranian *dahyu-pati-* with Greek δεσ-πότης.

However, another (apparently new) Indo-European etymology seems possible to me. From the PIE root *\*dens-* 'to be(come) clever or wise' (cf. LIV: 102) we have Vedic *das-rá-* (< *\*d̥ns-ró-*) 'clever, skilful', which occurs especially as an epithet of the worder-working Áśvins. Nine times they are called *dasrā* in the R̥gveda, nine times *dāsrā*, and four times *dās-rau* (cf. Lubotsky 1997: I, 666), the accentual variation being attested even in one and the same standing formula: cf. *dasrā hīraṇyavartanī* in RV 1,92,18b with *dāsrā hīraṇyavartanī* RV 5,75,2c; 8,5,11b; 8,8,1c; 8,87,5c. Therefore, the accent in *dāsa-* instead of the expected *\*dasá-* is no obstacle to this etymology. For *dāsyu-* instead of the expected *\*dasyú-*, cf. RV 7,18,5c *śimýu-* but RV 1,100,18a *śimyu-*, this being likewise the name of an inimical people. Semantically it makes good sense to derive a word meaning 'man' from a root expressing cleverness, cf. Sanskrit *manu(ṣya)-* 'man' from the root *man-* 'to think'.

The ethnic name of the Dāsas, then, appears to have a good Indo-European etymology and to suggest that its bearers belonged to the 'Iranian' branch of Indo-Iranians, and even more specifically to a vanguard of the later Scythians/Sakas, who however, left their early 'Iranian' community of the south Russian steppes before the Proto-Iranian sound change  $*s > h$ . This in turn suggests that the Dāsas are genetically related to the 'Kāfirs' of the Hindukush, whose language likewise appears to descend from Pre-Proto-Iranian.

### 2.3 *The Dāsas, Vrātyas and early Magadhans*

#### 2.3.1. *The BMAC and Gangetic Copper Hoards*

The culture characterized by the 'Ochre Coloured Pottery' (OCP) in the upper Ganges Valley (c. 2000-1200 BC) is based on the local 'Early Harappan' horizon — the Mature Indus Civilization did not extend quite this far east. That the rule of the OCP was taken over by Aryan speakers representing the BMAC is suggested by the associated 'Gangetic Copper Hoards' which contain different kinds of copper-bronze weapons including antennae-hilted swords (see Yule 1985). These enormous hoards imply the exploitation of the local copper deposits. As immediately noted by Pierre Amiet (1977: 110), the antennae-hilted swords have a close typological parallel among the looted grave goods of the BMAC; coming from Afghanistan, such a BMAC sword now in the Louvre is assumed to date from c. 2000-1800 BC.

The distance between the BMAC in Afghanistan and the Ganges-Yamuna Doab is bridged by the BMAC cemeteries at Mehrgarh VIII, Sibri and Quetta in lower Indus Valley, which appear c. 1900 BC (cf. Jaridge 1985; 1987; 1991). Probably some BMAC people belonging to these immigrants continued straight to the Doab, some others to Gujarat and the Deccan (cf. Parpola 1988: 206f; below, section 2.3.4). Stuart Piggott already drew attention to the similarity of the Gangetic flat axes to those of the Indus Civilization, and thought that the very narrow, elongated axes at Chanhudaro in Sind and Nal in Baluchistan 'could well be ancestral' to the 'bar-celts' of the copper-hoards:

It is a long way from Nal to the nearest 'bar-celt' find (Rajpur on the Upper Ganges), but in general the whole Gangetic axe and 'bar-celt' series is unlikely to be a separate and independent evolution from

that of Harappā metallurgy... The deposition of hoards itself suggests a time of insecurity (Piggott 1950: 237f.).

#### 2.3.2. *OCP pottery, the ukhā pot, and the fire altar ritual*

By c. 1000 BC, the area earlier occupied by the OCP and the Copper Hoards became the centre of the Middle Vedic culture. Comparing the Vedic descriptions of ceramics and their manufacture with the archaeological evidence, Wilhelm Rau (1983: 48f) noted significant similarities between the OCP ceramics and the *ukhā* pot (on which see Rau 1972: 24-53; 1983: 43). The *ukhā* vessel occupies a central position in the Vedic 'fire altar' ritual (*agnicayana*). There is no reference to the complex ritual of building a fire altar in the Ṛgveda; it must have been incorporated in the Vedic *śrauta* ritual from the tradition that prevailed in the plains of north India before the immigration of the Ṛgvedic tribes, which fits the *ukhā*'s correlation with the OCP. There were temples with fire altars in the BMAC, especially at Dzharkutan in northern Bactria, and Togolok-21 in Margiana. Later on (in sections 4.5-6), I shall try to show that the Vedic fire altar ritual is closely associated with the 'preclassical' ritual of the Vrātyas and with the 'Kāfir' religion.

#### 2.3.3. *The 'preclassical' ritual of the Vrātyas and Śākta Tantrism*

The priestly cult of the Ṛgvedic Aryans mainly consisted of preparing the sacred Soma drink and offering it to Indra and other gods by pouring it into the fire and into the mouth of the priests (cf. Oberlies 1998-99). After the arrival of the Ṛgvedic Aryans in the Panjab, they fused with Atharvavedic Aryans, who had arrived there earlier; this is evidenced by the fact that the later hymns contain words preserving the Proto-Indo-European  $*l$  and other linguistic features foreign to the original dialect of the old 'family books' of the Ṛgveda. The late hymns also reflect the Atharvavedic religion, which is soon extensively codified in the Atharvaveda-Saṃhitā, naturally with much influence of the Ṛgvedic religion. The ensuing religious syncretism resulted in an extensive revision and codification of the ritual in the Yajurveda, in which the traditions of the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda were widely combined. The great majority of the hundreds of rituals can be assumed to come from the Atharvavedic tradition, even though many of them have been combined with the Soma sacrifice; however, this constituent has the appearance of a secondarily attached 'stamp of approval' by the Ṛgvedic clergy.



Atharvavedic rituals were even otherwise modified when incorporated in the orthodox Vedic corpus; concrete acts, particularly those involving bloodshed and sexuality, were largely replaced by suggestive gestures or plain verbal or numerical symbolism. This has been demonstrated especially by Jan Heesterman (1962; 1967; 1985) who, in his analysis of the extant 'classical' Vedic ritual, convincingly argues that it goes back to an earlier 'preclassical' ritual, much more violent, agonistic and orgiastic in character. The 'preclassical' ritual seems to have survived purest in the so-called Vrātya rituals. The term *vrātya* denotes a band of warring young men, bound together by a vow, *vrata*. The Vrātya-Stomas celebrated at the end of their raiding expeditions cleansed these warriors of their impurity caused by violence, and distributed the wealth amassed by them. Some peculiarities of the Vrātya-Stomas connect them with the Vedic new-year ritual Mahāvratā, the horse sacrifice (or human sacrifice, though this was already obsolete in the 'classical' Vedic ritual) associated with a victorious war expedition of a king aspiring to universal rulership, and the Fire Altar ritual (see esp. Hauer 1927; Heesterman 1962; Falk 1986).

One characteristic feature of the Vrātya-Stomas is the participation of a prostitute (called *pumś-calī-* with the Māgadhī *l* instead of *pumś-carī-* 'woman roaming around with men', cf. Hock 1993: 219) and 'a bard hailing from Magadha' (*māgadha*): these two abuse each other and perform sexual intercourse, an act otherwise found in the Vedic ritual only at the Mahāvratā and the horse (or human) sacrifice. The Vrātya apparel used during the raiding expedition is to be given to an unworthy Brahmin hailing from Magadha (*brahmabandhu māgadhadeśīya* in LŚS 8,6,28). The Vrātyas (and the soldiers of the horse sacrifice) moreover use a clumsy chariot called *vipatha*, which obsolete term is explained as 'the chariot of the easterners' (*prācyā-ratha*, LŚS 8,6,9). That the expression *prācyāḥ* 'easterners' refers to the Magadhans is confirmed by Megasthenes, who speaks of Pāṭaliputra, the capital of Magadha, as 'the greatest city in India called Palímbothra, in the country of the Prāsioi' (Arrian, *Indica* 10,5); see also section 4.5. For the chariot, cf. Figs. 2 & 5.

These references connect the Vrātya rituals with Magadha and suggest the prevalence of bardic activity and orgiastic cults in the early religion of Magadha. This country remained long outside the Vedic pale, while at the times of the Atharvaveda, inimical people called Aṅga and Magadha were living to the southeast of the Vedic Aryans, for various evils were banned to them (cf. AV 5,22,14). Yet the references suggest that the religion of

the Magadhans have influenced the Atharvavedic religion, and that this influence is to be found especially in the Vrātya rituals. Ever since the Śākta-Tantrism with its gruesome and sexually loaded cult of violent goddesses like Durgā and Kālī rose into prominence in the first millennium AD, it has prevailed particularly in eastern India. I have long argued that Śākta Tantrism goes back to the preforms of Vrātya rituals first encountered in the Vrātya book of the Atharvaveda (cf. Parpola 1983; 1988: 251ff; 1992; 1998b; 1999). In attempting to reconstruct these preforms that date from the second millennium BC, we must bear in mind that the Vedic Vrātya rites have been tampered with by combining them with the 'R̥gvedic' Soma ritual and at the same time by purging their 'offending' features to some extent; and that the Purāṇic and Tantric rituals too have been subject to other kind of historical developments, among them 'spiritualization' exemplified by their Yogic and Buddhist interpretations.

#### 2.3.4. Origins of the Māgadhī Prakrit

Māgadhī, the language of Magadha, is the easternmost Aryan dialect of which we have knowledge in Vedic times. Speakers of Proto-Māgadhī must have moved to the Gangetic Valley fairly early, before it was occupied by the Vedic Aryans. On their eastward advance from the Ganges-Yamuna Doab, the Vedic Aryans encountered non-Vedic people worshipping 'demons' (*asura*), and the abominable language which they spoke resembles the later Māgadhī Prakrit (in the sample given, Vedic *r* is replaced with *l*, cf. ŚB 3,2,1,23-24; Hock 1993). Early examples of the Māgadhī-like occurrence of *l* for Proto-Indo-European \**r* are found from the late ('Atharvavedic') hymns of the R̥gveda onwards. A significant case is the verb *glah-* 'to grab, to take' instead of Vedic and classical Sanskrit *gra(b)h-* in the specific context of gambling with nuts used as 'dice': this game is associated with the Vrātyas (cf. Falk 1986).

The Middle Indo-Aryan Māgadhī Prakrit, which is supposed to have been the mother tongue of the Buddha, is known especially from Aśoka's inscriptions, Sanskrit dramas, and Jaina literature. It is distinguished by the following characteristics:

- ś, ṣ, s distinguished in Vedic and classical Sanskrit have merged into ś
- *l*, *r* distinguished in classical Sanskrit have merged into *l* (the opposite of the merger into *r* in the R̥gvedic dialect)

- Sanskrit *v* has changed into *b* (this change is found in other Prakrits as well); and
- Proto-Aryan *\*-az* > *-e* (with parallels in Iranian, and not *-o* as elsewhere in Indo-Aryan)

K.R. Norman (1995: 280) assumes the existence of an Old Indo-Aryan dialect ancestral to Māgadhī, whose speakers moved to the east of India, and notes that the existence of a dialect with the nominative singular in *-e* in the northwest of South Asia 'is shown by the *-e/-o* alternation in the post-Aśokan Kharoṣṭhi inscriptions'. Moreover, 'there is a single example of the change of final *-as* to *-e*, not *-o*, in the Ṛgveda in *sūre duhitā* (RV 1.34.5, but *sūro duhitā* in RV 7.69.4). This is perhaps a dialect form, taken over from some other source, although it is explained by some as showing dissimilation of vowels' (Norman 1995: 280, n. 4; for an extensive discussion, see Witzel 1989: 185-191).

While the above is more or less generally accepted, I have further pointed out the following (Parpola 1988: 262f.). The change *s* > *ś* is also characteristic of the Prakrit of northern Sindh called Vṛācaḍa (with *vrāca-* from Sanskrit *vrātya-*), and the *ś/s* alternation is attested in etyma connected with the Dāsas and the northwest of South Asia. The Dāsa name Śāmbara (this is the Ṛgvedic form) alternates with Saṃvara (variant found in Epic, Purāṇic and Tantric texts) and thus involves two Māgadhī characteristics, *s* > *ś* and *v* > *b* (see section 3.5.1).

Another important case is the word *dāsa-* itself. The word *dāśa-* which, according to the dictionaries, means 'fisherman' can be shown to mean 'servant' in its earliest Vedic occurrence in VS 30,16; this makes it a double of *dāsa-* the most common meaning of which is 'slave, servant'. The identity of these variants is proved by the doubles *dāsera-* = *dāśera-* and *dāseya-* = *dāśeya-*, all these words meaning 'son of a slave girl, bastard', an abusive term (= Sanskrit *dāsyāḥ putraḥ* in AB 2,19,1 = Pāli *dāsīputta-* = Prakrit *dāsīe utta-*), as well as by the following doubles of tribal names (localized in the upper Indus Valley, Sindh and Marwar): *dāseraka-* = *dāśeraka-* and *dāsamīya-* = *dāśamīya-* (cf. Parpola 1988: 262, with further material).

The *s/ś* alternation can be explained from contact of Proto-Māgadhī speakers with Proto-Dravidian speakers: the only Proto-Dravidian sound related to sibilants was the *\*c*, phonematically a palatal affricate, but when ungeminated in an intervocalic position (*\*c-*, *\*-c-*), realized phonetically

as a dental or a palatal sibilant (cf. Tikkanen 1987: 295; Emeneau 1988). This is in agreement with the hypothesis that the people of the Indus Civilization spoke a Dravidian language (cf. Parpola 1994), and the one-time presence of Vṛātyas and Dāsas in the Indus Valley.

The Harappans had a settlement (Shortughai) even in Bactria (cf. Francfort 1989), and there is growing evidence for a lively **interaction** between the BMAC and the Indus Civilization during the late urban **phase**, c. 2100-1900 BC (cf. Jarrige and Quivron 1999). Indeed, I am **arguing** that the Dāsa élite of the BMAC may have taken over the rule in the Indus Valley as well, and thus initiated the slow linguistic Aryanization **of** northern South Asia, even if they continued using Proto-Dravidian in their seals and administration (cf. Parpola 2001). Evidence for such a BMAC take-over of power is the sudden proliferation of seals with a geometric motif and without inscription in the late phase, agreeing with the BMAC seals which are without script and which abound in all kinds of geometrical motifs, many offering parallels to the late Indus seals. Even more important is the appearance of cylinder seals of the BMAC type and militaristic motifs which, however, are carved in the Harappan style and carry Indus script with a native Harappan sign sequence (cf. Fig. 24).

The 'race-course' of Dholavira, which does not have a parallel at any other Harappan city, might also be a BMAC/Dāsa innovation. The large copper hoard of the late-Harappan site of Daimabad in Maharashtra contains an image of an ithyphallic man driving a chariot yoked to two oxen. At another Chalcolithic site of the Deccan, Hallur, two antennae-hilted swords have been found. The cult of a male deity connected with the water buffalo, and of a protective goddess worshipped with bloody sacrifices, is very prominent and widespread on the folk level in the Deccan and South India. These are some indicators suggesting that the Dāsas/Vṛātyas proceeded from the Indus Valley not only eastwards but also southwards.

Unfortunately, we have no written sources from the BMAC, and the linguistic material that with certainty can be associated with the Dāsas and early Magadhans is also extremely scanty. In this situation, the linguistic evidence has to be supplemented by a study of religious and cultural traditions, where the material remains of the BMAC offer a little better conditions of interpretation. In the remaining part of this study, I endeavour to show that the testimony of religion supports the archaeological and linguistic evidence by connecting the Scythian/Saka tradition (as described by Herodotus and evidenced by archaeology) and their Bronze Age

predecessors of the Eurasiatic steppes (archaeology and early Aryan loan-words in Finno-Ugric languages) with the Dāsas of the Ṛgveda, the 'Kāfirs' of Nuristan, the Vrātyas of the Vedic ritual, and the Śākta Tantric traditions of later Hindu and Buddhist tradition.

### 3. Fortress and its goddess

#### 3.1. Divodāsa's raids of Dāsa forts: when and where?

In 1988, I assumed that the battles of the Ṛgvedic kings against the Dāsas, Dasyus and Paṇis in the Indo-Iranian borderlands took place around 1750 BC, when the impoverished phase of the BMAC started. As could be seen above, I now think that these battles are to be dated later, around 1400 BC, when the main bulk of the Ṛgvedic Aryans came to the Panjāb. This date of c. 1400 BC is suggested by Michael Witzel (1995a-b) on the basis of genealogical counts of the Ṛgvedic kings: perhaps some ten generations or about 200 years separate Divodāsa Atithigva, one of the main persecutors of the Dāsas, from the transition from the Ṛgveda (which does not mention iron) to the Atharvaveda (which does mention iron) or the transition from Bronze Age to Iron Age that in north India took place c. 1200-1150 BC. In my present reconstruction, the second wave of Ṛgvedic Aryans was pushed to South Asia by the arrival of mounted Iranians to southern Central Asia from c. 1500 BC onwards (cf. section 1.2.5).

King Sudās belongs to that main (second) wave of Ṛgvedic Aryans. But although he fought in the Panjāb, either he himself or his father Divodāsa seems to have arrived there from Afghanistan. In ṚV 6,61,1-3, Sarasvatī is said to have given the powerful Divodāsa as a son to Vadhryaśva, who worshipped her with offerings. (That Vadhryaśva is the same person as Atithigva, and Divodāsa the son of Vadhryaśva the same as the father of Sudās, is very likely, cf. Witzel 1995b: 319; 343-352; Macdonell and Keith 1912: I, 363.).

The description of Sarasvatī in ṚV 6,61 does not at all fit the sacred stream Sarasvatī in India (cf. Zimmer 1879: 6); indeed, Alfred Hillebrandt (1927/I: 510-515) has convincingly argued that the Sarasvatī mentioned here is the river called Haraxvaitī in Avestan and Harauvatiš in Old Persian, situated in southern Afghanistan which was known (in Greek) as the province of Arachosia in the Persian Empire. (This solution is accepted, among others, by Thomas Burrow 1973: 126 who presents further arguments, and Hans Henrich Hock 1999: 165f). In ṚV 6,61,

Sarasvatī is said to have seized from the [inimical] Paṇi his numerous enjoyment (i.e. cattle), and she slays the Pārāvatas; she is further asked to throw down the *deva*-revilers, the descendants of every Bṛsaya. In Alexander's time, the Satrap of Arachosia was a man called Βαρσαέντης (Arrian, *Anabasis* 3,8,3; 3,21,1); this name closely resembles Bṛsaya which must have been a hereditary royal title (this suggestion of Hillebrandt's based on the phrase 'every Bṛsaya' is supported by many similar cases of early South Asian kings, such as Paurava: Pōros, and the explicit statement of Curtius [8,12,14] with regard to Taxiles), while the Pārāvata (lit. 'people from afar') correspond to the people called Παρουῖται whom Ptolemy (6,17) places in Areia (the province next to Arachosia in Afghanistan). The Paṇis are often mentioned as enemies of the Ṛgvedic kings, sometimes along with the Dāsas and Dasyus, and in very similar terms (cf. ṚV 5,34,6-7; 7,6,3; AV 5,11,6), and Hillebrandt (1927: I, 508f.) has connected this with the fact that according to Strabo (11,9,2) a people called Párnoi belonged to the Da(h)as, and lived previously in Margiana. Paṇi is supposed to be a Prakritic development of \*Pṛṇi, which seems to be attested in the full grade form in Paṇāya, the name of an enemy of King (Divodāsa) Atithigva in ṚV 1,53,8 and 10,48,8.

#### 3.2. Fortified manors of the Afghan highlands and the BMAC

G. K. Bhat (1978: 66-76) and Lubotsky (1997/II: 1385, 1394) offer a convenient synopsis and analysis of all the twenty-four Ṛgvedic references to the killing of Śambara (Sāyaṇa adds ṚV 6,26,3, though Śambara is not explicitly mentioned). Bhat, like Macdonell (1897: 161) and Hillebrandt (1929/II: 243f.), comes to the reasonable conclusion that Śambara — who is called a Dāsa and son of Kulitara in ṚV 4,30,14 — refers to a human enemy of Divodāsa [or to the god of that enemy], rather than to some natural phenomenon such as a cloud. With the help of Indra, by the 40th autumn, Divodāsa Atithigva broke the 90 or 99 or 100 fortresses of Dāsa Śambara, who lived in the mountains, obtaining great riches (ṚV 1,130,7 *bhināt pūro navatīm indra pūrāve divodāsāya.../ atithigvāya śambaram girér ugró āvābharat / mahó dhānāni dāyamāna ójasā ...*; ṚV 2,12,11 *yāḥ śambaram párvateṣu kṣiyāntaṁ catvāriṁśyāṁ śarády anvāvindat*; ṚV 4,30,14 *utá dāsam kaulitarām bṛhatāḥ párvatād ádhi / āvāhann indra śambaram*; ṚV 6,26,5 *áva girér dāsam śambaram han právo divodāsam citrábhir ūtí*; cf. further Rau 1976; Parpola 1988: 210ff). The repeated

references to Śambara's mountainous habitats seem quite significant. If Divodāsa was born in Arachosia and his son Sudās fought in the Pānjab, he is likely to have crossed the Afghan highlands roughly from Kandahar to Kabul and from there to Swāt. The higher mountains are in the northern part of this itinerary.

Divodāsa may also have invaded the southernmost part of Nuristan and conquered it, for only the Ashkun Kāfirs inhabiting these parts worshipped Indra, who was their highest god, whereas elsewhere Imra (<\*Yama-rāja) was the head of the Kāfir pantheon. There are clear indications, however, that Imra previously had this position among the Ashkuns, too, for Indra has taken over from Imra for example his daughters (cf. section 4.4). By this R̥gvedic conquest of the Ashkun area, the Kāfirs seem to have obtained the horse.

It cannot be a mere coincidence that the very region of Divodāsa's assumed itinerary (cf. Fig. 8) is dotted with large traditional farm compounds surrounded by massive walls of kneaded mud and provided with defense towers (cf. Fig. 9). These manors, documented by Szabo and Barfield (1991: 140-195), are presently inhabited by Pashto-speaking farmers and called *qala* 'fortress' (the word is of Arabic etymology). There is an evident similarity between the present-day *qala* and their local Bronze Age predecessors, the fortified manors of the BMAC (see Fig. 10): indeed, the overall settlement pattern of the Central Asian oases has remained remarkably stable over the millennia (cf. Hiebert 1994: 28).

After Divodāsa and his god Indra had passed through the Afghan highlands, the Dāsas undoubtedly mended their manors and went on living. Similarly at Gonur, the '*qala*' architecture of the BMAC was continued in the post-'urban' Takhirbaj period (c. 1750-1500), and at Tillya Tepe in northern Afghanistan in the Iron Age (cf. Hiebert 1994:129f.):

Massive exterior walls made of mud brick are typical of the later (Parthian, Sasanian, and medieval) architecture of the Margiana oasis... and can be used as an analogy for the deflated remains of the massive exterior walls in Bronze Age Margiana to suggest that these walls functioned both for defense and for insulation against summer heat and winter sandstorms (Hiebert 1994: 115).

Correspondingly, I trust, the Dāsa fortresses of the Afghan highlands perpetrated earlier local traditions of the BMAC. The beginnings of mon-

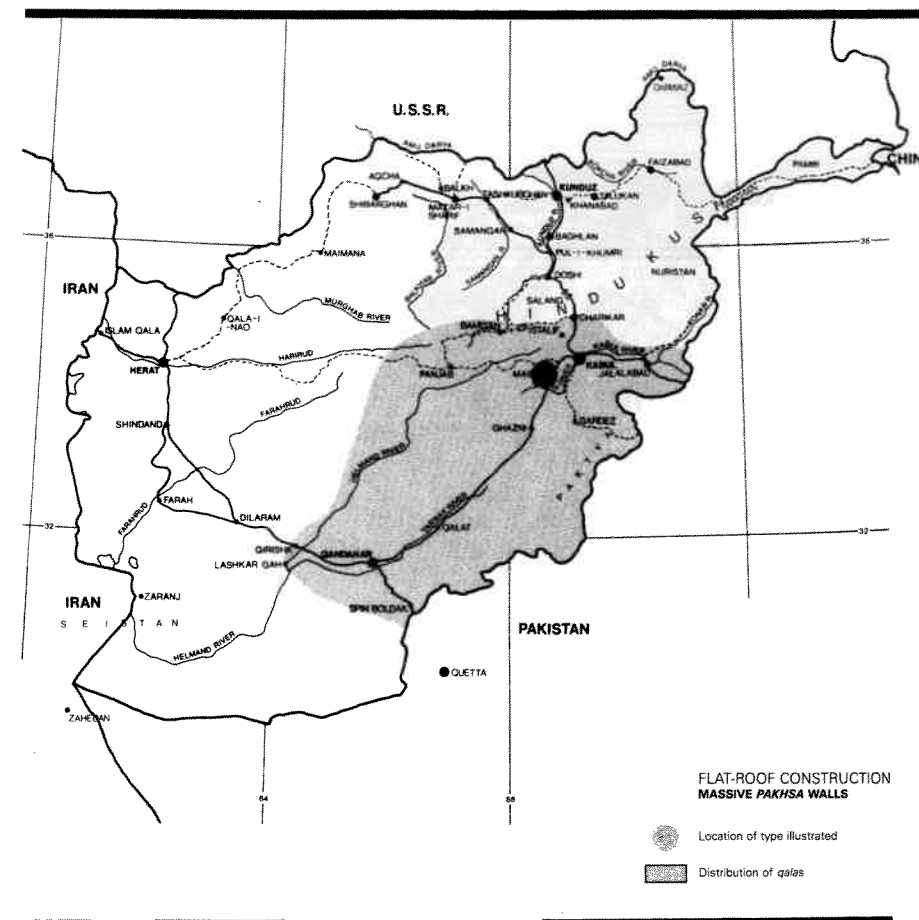


Fig. 8. Distribution of the fortified manors (*qala*) with massive pakhsha walls in Afghanistan (after Szabo and Barfield 1991: 140).

umental architecture in southern Afghanistan go back to the 'temple' of Mundigak (Casal 1961), built in the initial phase of the BMAC, c. 2500 BC.

### 3.3. The 'palace' of Dashly and the Tantric *maṇḍala*

The groundplan of the modern Afghan *qalas* and the similar BMAC manors is usually square. Two remarkable monumental buildings of the BMAC having a square groundplan are the 'fortress' of Sapalli-tepa in



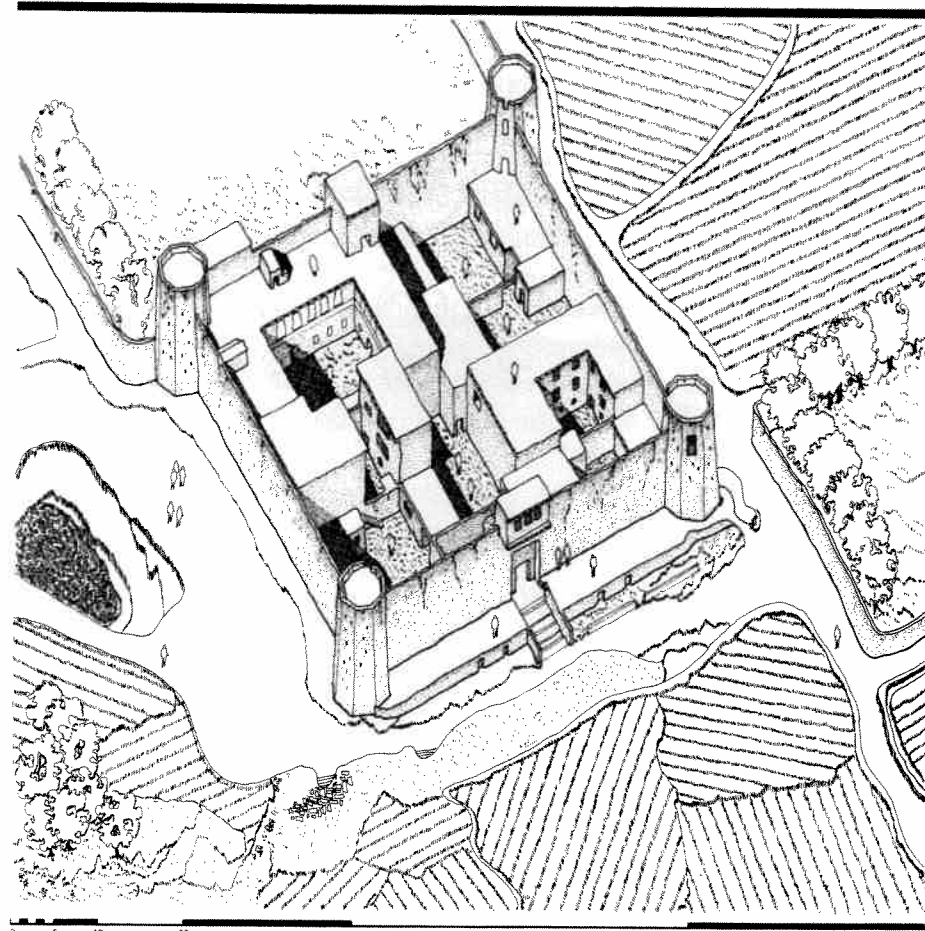


Fig. 9. Axonometric drawing of a *qala* after Szabo and Barfield (1991: 188).

northern Bactria (Fig. 11) and the 'palace' of Dashly-3 in southern Bactria (Fig. 12). As first noted by Burkhard Brentjes (1981: 26), the groundplan of these buildings with their T-shaped corridors in each cardinal direction bears a striking resemblance to the Tantric *maṇḍala* (Fig. 13).

The 'palace' of Dashly-3 has a T-shaped corridor projecting from the middle of each of the four walls and L/V-shaped corridors projecting from each corner of the walls. There is a great similarity to the Chinese TLV-mirrors (Fig. 14), which start appearing in the early Han dynasty period, c. 200 B. C. (cf. Cammann 1948); indeed the pattern is so distinctive that

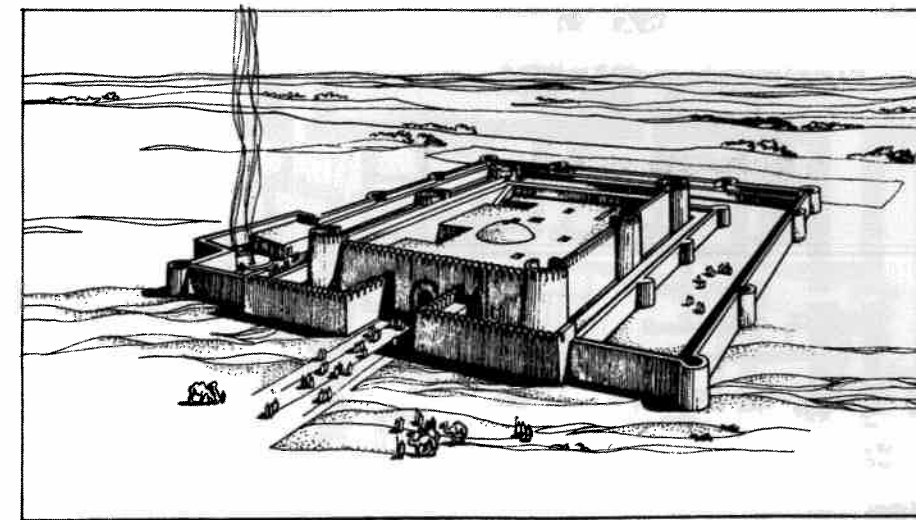


Fig. 10. Axonometric drawing of Togolok-21 in Margiana after Sarianidi 1987: 52).

there can hardly be doubt about continuity of tradition (cf. Brentjes 1981: 27). The T's of the TLV mirrors have been connected with the four gates of the Middle Kingdom mentioned in Chinese classical literature, and with the gates of the imperial tombs. The four quadrants of the TLV mirrors represent the 'four seas', and their occupants the 'four spirits' of the four directions, which go back to the Chou dynasty period: the Azure Dragon of the east, the Red Bird of the south, the White Tiger of the west, and the Black Tortoise (and snake) of the north, the centre being connected with the star Chao-Yao (in Ursa Major) overhead (cf. Cammann 1948: 163, 165.).

The occurrence of the TLV pattern of ultimately BMAC origin on the round metal mirrors in China is not without significance. Round metal mirrors (with anthropomorph handles suggesting Syrian and ultimately Egyptian origin) are known from the BMAC, and round metal mirrors with a handle or with a loop are known widely from Central and Inner Asia from the Late Bronze Age; by the end of the second millennium BC the metal mirror became part of the standard equipment of the mounted nomad. The Chinese adopted the metal mirror from the west, probably in Sinkiang (cf. Kuz'mina 2001: 14f).



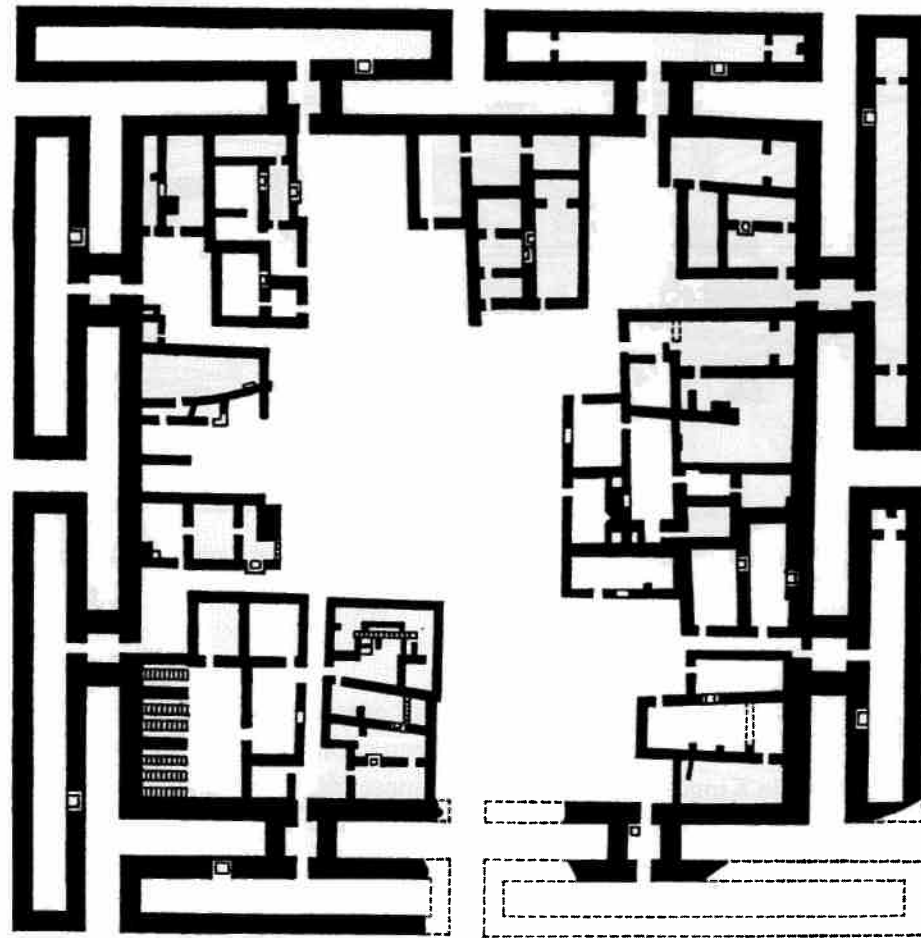


Fig. 11. Groundplan of the BMAC 'fort' at Sapalli Tepa in northern Bactria, south Tajikistan, c. 2000 BC (after Askarov 1977: Fig. 2).

The 'maṇḍala' pattern of square with T-shaped projections is found also on many of the geometric seals of the BMAC, with almost endless variation (cf. Fig. 15). A good number of BMAC seals reached the Ordos region of China in the Bronze Age. The Tantric maṇḍala suggests that the BMAC pattern exemplified by the 'palace' of Dashly-3 dispersed early on not only to the steppes of Eurasia and China, but also to South Asia. The square with T-shaped gates projecting from the middle of each side is fundamental not only to the Lamaist *thangkas* (which Cammann 1948 thought

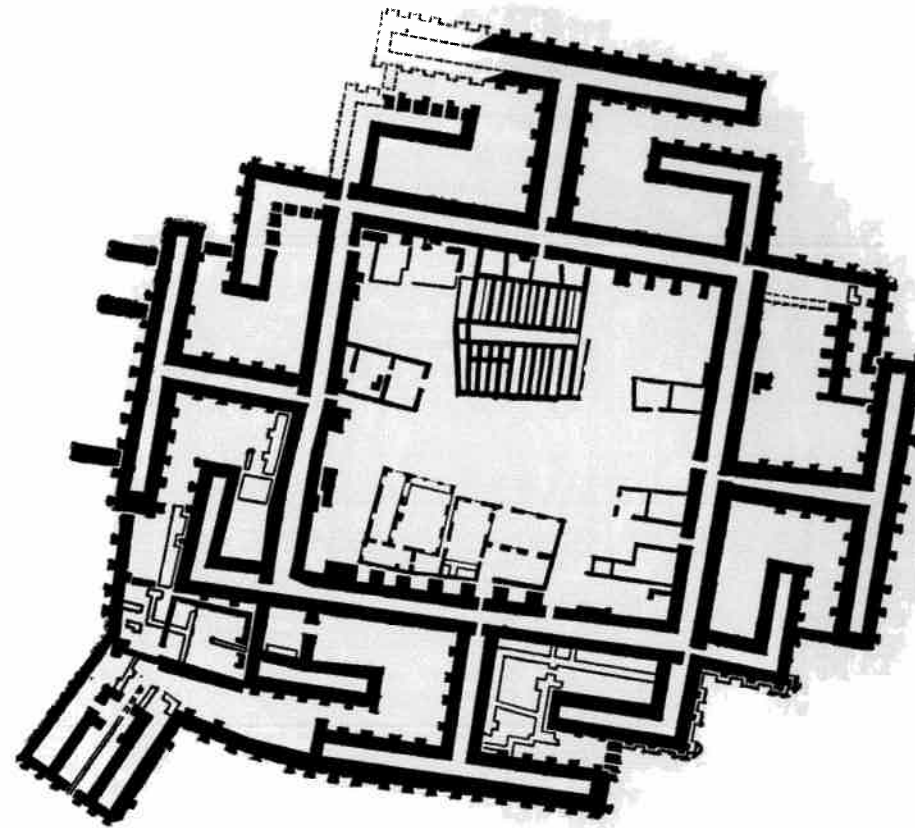


Fig. 12. Groundplan of the BMAC 'palace' of Dashly-3 in southern Bactria, north Afghanistan, c. 2000 BC (after Sarianidi 1986: 53).

owed their T-shaped gates to the Chinese tradition of TLV mirrors that partly survived to the T'ang period) and to the earlier Hindu icons from which they are derived. This pattern is one variant of the square *vāstupuruṣa-maṇḍala*, the basic groundplan of all Indian architecture, which has an early South Asian background in the fire altars of the Vedic ritual (cf. Kramrisch 1948/I: 21ff). The most common variant of the Vedic fire altars, namely that of an eagle, is planned as a square with a projection in the middle of each side (cf. Fig. 26). This pattern agrees with the groundplan of the early Buddhist stūpas in the Indo-Iranian borderlands (cf. Fig. 16) and with those numerous BMAC seals which have the form of a stepped cross (Fig. 27: e-f, and Sarianidi 1998b). The pattern can further



Fig. 13. The five-deity Tantric maṇḍala of (Cakra-)Śaṃvara according to Ghaṇṭāpāda (after Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra 1995: Fig. 65.). The central deity is the four-faced, twelve-armed Śaṃvara, embraced by his Prajñā, Vajravārāhī. In the four directions they are surrounded by four other fierce goddesses, Dākinī, Lāmā, Khaṇḍarohā and Rūpiṇī. In the intermediate corners are four holy vessels (cf. Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra 1995: 48).

be found in the popular Indian game of pachisi (cf. Brown 1968), which forms a counterpart to the early Chinese boardgames associated with the TLV motif (cf. Cammann 1948).

As already noted by Brentjes (1981: 27f.), all of these Indian, Tibetan and Chinese manifestations of the 'maṇḍala' basically represent the groundplan of the royal palace or fortified city, with gates at every side,



Fig. 14. A representative Chinese TLV-mirror from the Han dynasty period in the Freer Gallery, Washington, D. C. (after Cammann 1948: Fig 1).

symbolizing the residence of the supreme ruler of the entire earth that extends into four cardinal directions. In the iconic painting and in its architectural counterpart, the temple or (as in Buddhism) the funeral monument, both of which have the divinity as the ruler in the centre, this cosmogram is used as means of worship and reintegration (cf. e.g. Tucci 1961: 23, 42ff; Snellgrove 1987: 198ff).

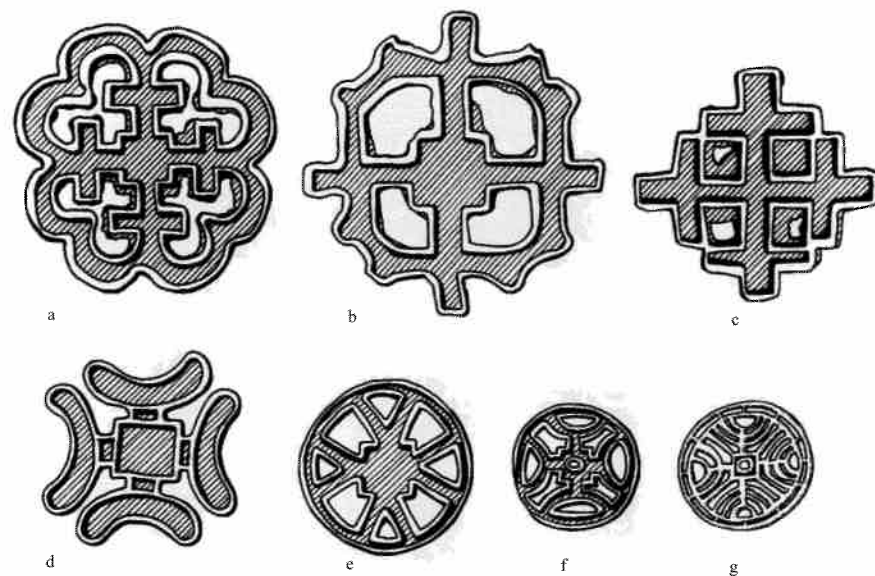


Fig. 15. Examples of the 'maṇḍala' pattern on BMAC seals (after Baghestani 1997: nos. 150 (a), 203, 209, 326, 522, 540, 579)

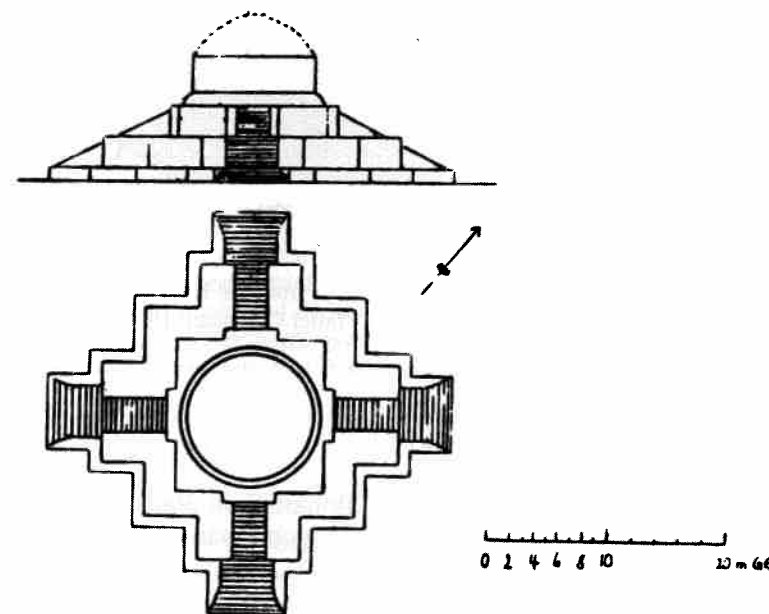


Fig. 16. The 'Great Stūpa' at Rawāk near Khotan in Sinkiang (after G. Gropp in Franz 1980: Fig. 5).

### 3.4. Yima's fortress in the 'Aryan expanse'

The universal ruler (*cakravartin*) of the Indian tradition corresponds to the first king of mankind in the Iranian tradition, Yima. Following S.P. Tolstov's (1953: 103-105) attempt to link it to two somewhat similar later fortresses in Turkmenistan (Kalaly-Gyr and Küzäli-Gyr, dated to c. 500 BC), Burkhard Brentjes (1981: 10ff) and Karl Jettmar (1981) have compared the late Sasanian description of King Yima's fortress (undoubtedly based on older sources) to the 'palace' of Dashly-3. According to Vidēvdāt 2,21-43, Ahura Mazda ordered Yima to build a fortress (*var-*), 'long as a riding ground on every side of the square', in the 'Aryan expanse' (*airyānəm vaējō*), which offered plenty of grass for cattle, but where shelter was needed during the long winter. But Vidēvdāt describes exactly also the way in which the traditional Afghan *qala* with its thick *pakhsha* walls is constructed: Yima had to crush earth and knead it with his fingers, as the potter kneads his clay, and build the *var*, establishing there 'dwelling places, consisting of a house with a balcony, a courtyard, and a gallery', and stock it inexhaustibly with all kinds of seeds.

But where was the 'Aryan expanse'? In a guest lecture entitled 'The Home of the Aryans', held on 4 June 1999 in Kyoto (and published in 2000 — this version was not accessible to me), Michael Witzel discussed this old problem on the basis of the climatic conditions and geographical distribution of the various Iranian tribes mentioned in the first chapter of Vidēvdāt. Witzel's new solution, the highlands of Afghanistan, fits the description well (even though the precise identification of many geographical references remains hypothetical): the Afghan highlands are situated in the centre. Referring to the researches of Szabo and Barfield (1991), I pointed to the supporting fact that the still ongoing transhumance has for thousands of years been bringing the nomadic tribes together there from all directions for the summer months (cf. Fig. 17). At that time the tribes will also be in contact with each other, especially for celebrating marriages. Witzel's solution thus places Yima's fortress in the Afghan highlands, where it is matched by the *qalas*.

### 3.5. Fortresses of Dāsa Śāmbara and the cult of Durgā

The name of King Bṛsaya, Divodāsa's foe in Arachosia, has long been recognised as non-Aryan, and undoubtedly represents the original non-Indo-European language of the BMAC (cf. Lubotsky 2001; Parpola in

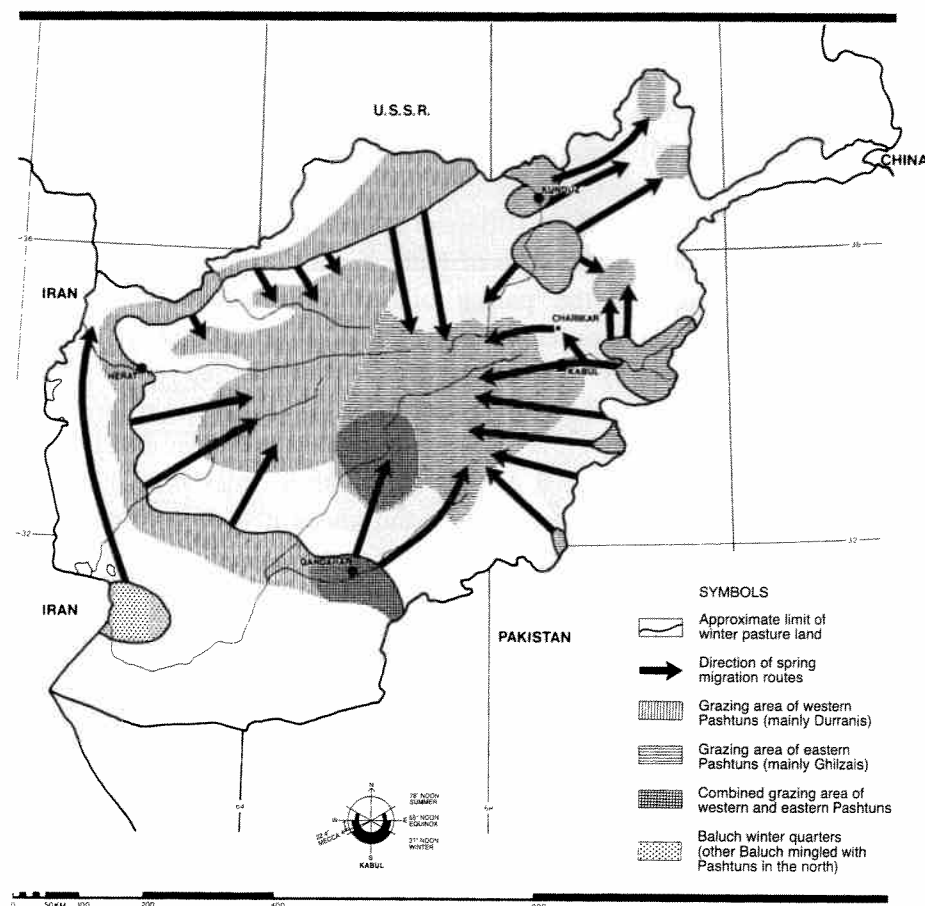


Fig. 17: Nomadic routes in Afghanistan (after Szabo and Barfield 1991: 257, reference map 12).

press a, §3.1), which may have survived to Hellenistic times, to judge from the name of Arachosia's ruler Barsaéntēs. Some other names of the enemies of Divodāsa and other Ṛgvedic kings, however, make the impression of being Aryan in etymology, and in the following I argue that this is the case with Dāsa Śambara, with whom Divodāsa seems to have been fighting towards the end of his life ('on the 40th autumn') and in a mountainous terrain, thus probably somewhere closer to Kabul. In any case, the Ṛgvedic hymns speak of the Dāsas, Dasyus and Paṇis not only as possessing cattle, gold and valuable goods, which fits the richness of the

BMAC in its 'urban' phase (and the 10,000 looted graves might well represent even the late phase), but also as having sharp weapons, horses and chariots and as being able defenders of their property (cf. RV 2,15; 10,108; Parpola 1988: 217f).

### 3.5.1. Etymology of the name Śambara

Śambara is one of the principal Dāsas mentioned by name in the Ṛgveda. This name has generally been considered as non-Aryan, and in particular Austro-Asiatic, mainly because the ethnic name *Sora* of an Austro-Asiatic speaking tribe in Orissa goes back to Sanskrit *śabara* 'savage'. It is true that the word *śabara* when first attested in the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa (7,18) is the name of a Dasyu people (along with Andhra, Puṇḍra, Pulinda and Mūṭiba), who live in large numbers beyond the borders of the Vedic realm, probably in eastern India (cf. Macdonell and Keith 1912: I, 23f). However, determining the ethnic affinity of the people called Śabara in Vedic times from the fact that Austro-Asiatic speakers are called so today, is tantamount to claiming that the Mleccha likewise met by the Vedic Aryans in eastern India and speaking a Māgadhī-like language were Muslims, because the Muslims were later called Mleccha. Eventually the Sora were called *śabara* by Indo-Aryan speakers because the word had come to denote 'fierce tribesman, mountaineer', just as the word *mleccha* had come to mean 'barbarian, foreigner (who cannot speak properly the Vedic language)'.

Nevertheless it is significant that people called Śabara who moreover were labelled Dasyus were encountered by the Vedic Aryans in eastern India, for it is in accordance with my suggestion that the words *śambara*- and *śabara*- provide early evidence for the Māgadhī Prakrit (with ś for s, and b for v), and that this Middle Indian dialect spoken in Magadha in eastern India was brought there from the northwest by Dāsa immigrants around the 20th century BC (see section 2.3.4). In my opinion, the two words belong together and their difference can be explained by taking *śabara*- as the reduced grade variant, exactly as is the case with Sanskrit *sam-/sa-* < \*sm- 'together (with), altogether' (adverb and verbal and nominal prefix expressing union or completeness), which I take to be the first part of this etymon.

Śambara is known also from the epics as an enemy of Indra (cf. Sørensen 1925: 192f); Śambara is further the name of a fierce Tantric



Buddhist deity, derived from the Śaiva Tantric tradition of eastern India (cf. Snellgrove 1987: 153). In both cases the name Śambara is also attested in the form Saṃvara, which allows a good Aryan etymology for the word. The first part is the emphasizing prefix *sam-* 'fully, completely', while the second part *vara-* means 'enclosing, protecting' as well has 'obstructing, hindering, checking' (in RV 1,143,5 with reference to an inimical army), from the root *vr-* 'to surround, enclose, protect, ward off'. Śambara/Saṃvara seems to be a personification of 'defence, protection, resistance', like Vṛtra, Indra's mythical opponent, whose name is derived from the same root *vr-*. That Śambara is the Dāsa counterpart of Indra as the god of war is suggested by the etymologically almost identical Avestan deity *Haṃ-varəti-*, the personification of 'manly courage' (see further on), formed with the derivational suffix *-ti-* from the same root preceded by the same prefix.

Saṃvaraṇa is mentioned once in the R̥gveda (5,33,10) as the name of a sage (*ṛṣi*) rich in cattle. But besides being a proper name of the masculine gender, the word *saṃ-vāraṇa-* occurs four times in the R̥V as a neuter gender noun meaning 'enclosure' (for keeping cattle and horses and defending them against raiders; and for the sacrifice, with fire); in the Rāmāyaṇa *saṃ-varaṇa* means 'wall, rampart', which is recorded also for (lexical) Sanskrit *varaṇa-* and Sinhalese (*h*)*avura*, *avrā* < \**saṃvara-* (cf. CDIAL 13013). The word *śambara-*, too, is used in the neuter plural with the meaning of 'walls, fortifications' in RV 2,24,2 (cf. Macdonell 1897: 161f, comparing *vr̥trāṇi*); Burrow (1977: 74) found the same meaning further in RV 1,59,6 *ādūnot kṣṣhā āva śambaraṇi bhet* 'he shattered the palisades and broke down the rampart'. In this sense Sanskrit *śambara* = *saṃ-vara-* and (*saṃ-*)*varaṇa-* corresponds to Avestan *var-* 'fortress', which is used in Vidēvdāt of the *qala*-like castle built by Yima (see section 3.4), the primeval king of the Iranian tradition. That this word existed also in Scythian spoken in the Eurasiatic steppes is attested by the fact that it was borrowed into Hungarian, where *var* means 'fort, citadel'.

According to Mahābhārata 1,89,42, the eponymic founder of the Kuru kingdom is the son of King Saṃvaraṇa and of Tapatī, the daughter of the sun-god (*tataḥ saṃvaraṇāt saurī suṣuve tapatī kurum / rājatve taṃ prajāḥ sarvā dharmajña iti vavrire*: the second line is folk-etymologically based on the name Saṃvaraṇa). Kuru's parents here are almost certainly of Iranian origin: Saṃvaraṇa can be compared not only with Saṃvara/Śambara, but, also with the above-mentioned (Younger) Avestan divinity Haṃvarəti,

personification of 'valour, bravery', while Tapatī compares with the Goddess who, according to Herodotus (4,59), is called Ταβιτί (Tabiti is usually connected with the (Indo-)Iranian root *tap-* 'to burn', as well as Ossetic *tævd* and Modern Persian *taft* 'hot'). Herodotus also states that Tabiti is the chief object of worship by the Scythians, and identifies her with Hestia (the Greek goddess of the family hearth and domestic fire). Hence it may not be a mere coincidence that the name of the Indian Kuru dynasty resembles the name of the founder of the Persian Empire, *Kuruš* 'Cyrus' (cf. Hoffmann 1940: 146). The name Kuru first appears in the late R̥gvedic hymn 10,32,9, where King Kuru-śravaṇa is said to be a descendant of Trasadasyu, the well-known Pūru king.

### 3.5.2. The Tantric god (Cakra-)Śambara

The Sanskrit word *cakra* means 'circle' and 'wheel'. There are three concentric circles drawn inside the square border frame of the five-deity *maṇḍala* of Cakra-Śambara (cf. Fig. 13), and the iconographic manuals refer to three circles called *cakra* that accommodate the three times 16 subsidiary deities in Cakra-Śambara's 62-deity *maṇḍala* (Fig. 18). The latter *maṇḍala* is drawn so that the deities form as if eight spokes of a chariot-wheel *ratha-cakra*, which is used as the groundplan of monuments raised in Vedic times (or rather before) by and for great warriors and kings (see section 4.7).

(Cakra-)Śambara is considered to be a variant form of Heruka or Hevajra, a fierce deity derived from Śaiva Hinduism. In the Lamaist iconography, Śambara has the head of the buffalo, like Yama, the Hindu god of death. Yama's name corresponds to Iranian Yima, and above I have suggested the identity of Yima's *var* 'fortress' and the Vedic Śambara's *śambara* 'fortress'. The Buddhist Śambara's association with cemeteries supports his identity with Yama. The buffalo shape also connects him with Mahiṣa Asura, the buffalo demon of Hinduism, who is the prototype of a formidable warrior and the opponent and the (slain) bridegroom of goddess Durgā. Mahiṣa is identified with Śiva.

### 3.5.3. The 'temple-fort' of Dashly-3 and Tripura

The three circles of Cakra-Śambara's *maṇḍala* have a counterpart at Dashly-3 in southern Bactria in the BMAC 'temple-fort' which has three circular and concentric walls (cf. Fig. 19). The Dashly-3 'temple-fort' in



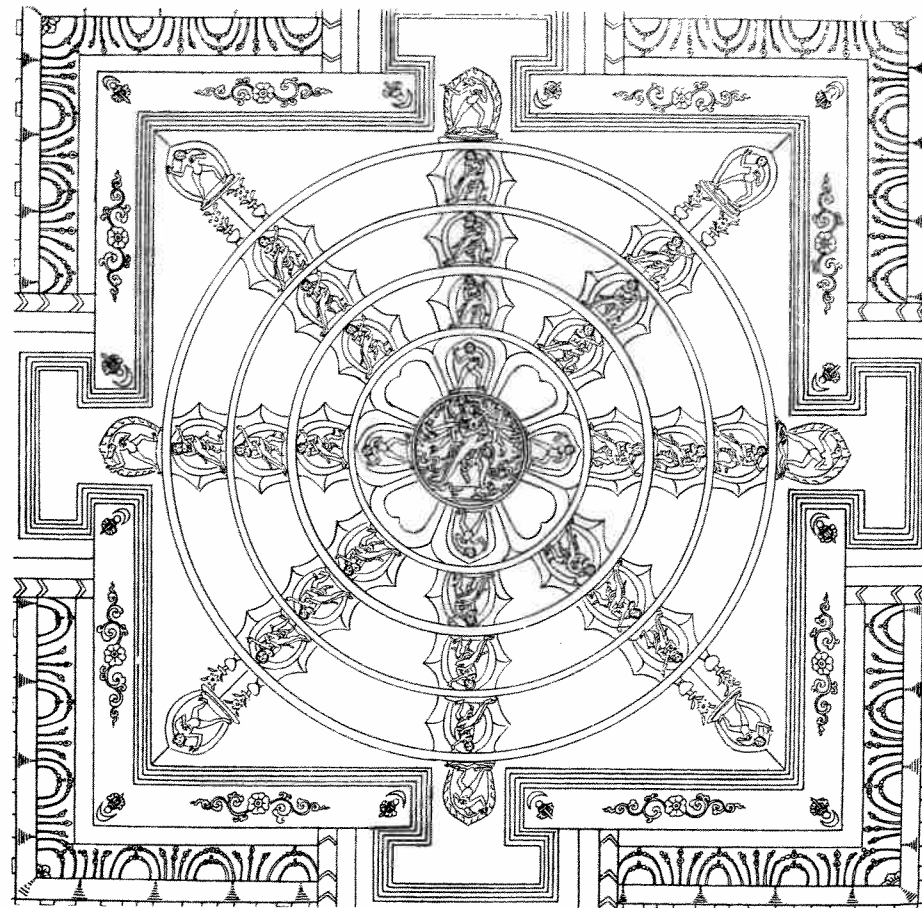


Fig. 18. The 62-deity maṇḍala of Cakra-Śaṃvara according to Mahāsiddha Kṛṣṇacārin (after Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra 1995: Fig. 64). The five-deity maṇḍala in the middle (cf. Fig. 13) is surrounded by three circles (*cakra*) representing the three planes of thought (*citta*), speech (*vāk*) and body (*kāya*). Each circle has 16 deities (consisting of eight pairs, every deity and every consort having a special name) in the eight (cardinal and intermediate) directions. The gates of the four cardinal directions are occupied by fierce goddesses called 'Crow-faced', 'Owl-faced', 'Dog-faced' and 'Pig-faced'. In the intermediate corners are goddesses called Yamadāhī, Yamadūtī, Yamadaṃṣṭrī and Yamamathanī (cf. Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra 1995: 48).

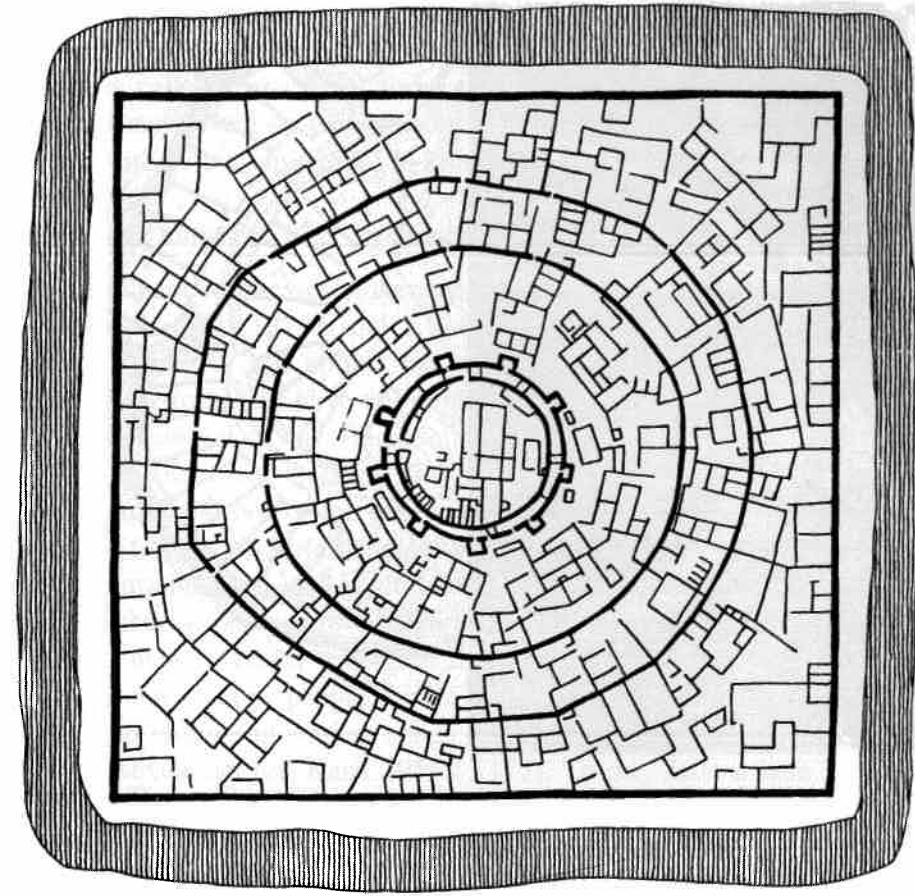


Fig. 19. The BMAC 'temple-fort' of Dashly-3 in southern Bactria (c. 1900 BC) (after Sarianidi 1986: 59).

turn resembles much the probably Proto-Aryan fortified 'town' of Arkaim in the southern Urals, which likewise has multiple circular walls (cf. Fig. 20).

The three walls further remind of the *tripura* 'triple fortress' of the Demons (Asura) in Hindu mythology. Wilhelm Rau (1976) has argued that the Dāsa fortresses had circular and often concentric walls, but the first Vedic text to hint at a fortress with three circular and concentric walls is the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa; the three walls are likely to be connected with the three 'magic' circles made in many Vedic rites by circumambulating

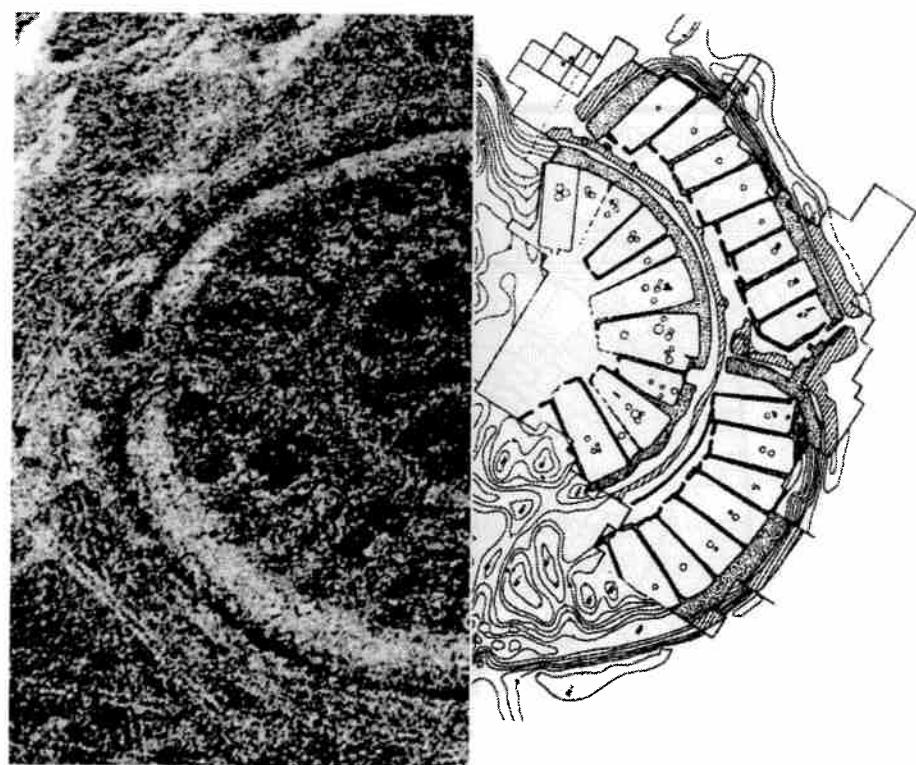


Fig. 20. The fortified 'town' of Arkaim with concentric circular walls, near Chelyabinsk in the southern Urals. Aerial photo and drawing. (Courtesy of G.B. Zdanovich).

the object three times. In the Śākta Tantric tradition, the 'triple fort' is associated with the Hindu goddess Durgā, who is also called Tripurā or Tripura-sundarī 'the beauty of the triple fort'.

#### 3.5.4. Śākta Tantric Yoginī temples and *cakra-pūjā*

In the maṇḍala of Cakra-Śambara, the centre is occupied by the main deity embraced by his consort, and the three circles around this couple are populated by other divine couples engaged in sexual intercourse. Among the earliest Śākta Tantric shrines surviving in India are the circular roofless *yoginī* temples of Central India; in the centre is the statue of the ithyphallic Śiva in his fearful Bhairava aspect, while the 64 niches distributed inside along the circular wall accommodate goddesses with heads of different animals (see Dehejia 1986). Evidently these shrines have been used

for the infamous and secret Śākta Tantric *cakra-pūjā*. In this 'circular worship' of the Goddess represented by a naked woman in the centre, devotees called *vīra*- 'hero' form a circle and, after consuming alcohol, fish and meat, have sexual intercourse with their female partners who can be chosen without any regard to kinship or caste.

#### 3.5.5. The 'autumnal forts' of Śambara and the 'festival of Śabarās'

Dāsa Śambara's fortresses broken by Indra have in several verses the epithet 'autumnal' (RV 1,131,4b and 1,174,2b = 6,20,10c *púraḥ...śāradīr*). The exact meaning of this epithet has remained unclear and debated. In my opinion, the fortresses have this epithet because they were the venue of the *navarātri* festival of the Goddess, which was celebrated in the autumn (*śarad*). In Kashmir, Goddess Durgā is called Śāradā 'autumnal' for this very reason, and one of the principal sites of her worship in Kashmir has been the fortress of Śār(a)dī 'autumnal (fort)'.

The autumnal *navarātri* culminates on the final tenth day in the 'festival of Śabarās' (*śābarotsava*). The word *śabara*- in this context has been taken to mean 'savage, tribesman', since the festival involves all sort of frivolity and revelry: people should throw mud on each other, abuse each other, and indulge in singing songs that mention male and female organs and the sexual act (cf. Kane 1955V: 177). To me, *śabara* here is a synonym of *vīra*- 'hero'; this meaning, implied also by the cognate Avestan *ham-var'ti*- '(god of) bravery', is suggested by the parallelism between the *śābarotsava* and the orgiastic *cakra-pūjā* of 'left-hand' Śākta Tantrism, where the devotee is called *vīra*-. This 'circular worship' seems to have developed from the *śābarotsava*, which is celebrated in honour of Durgā, the goddess of victory, just before the army, lustrated on this occasion, leaves for a war expedition. Both of these sexually loaded celebrations offer strikingly close parallels to the Vedic Vrātya-Stomas and to the similar Kāfir feast, which were likewise celebrated at the beginning of a raiding expedition (cf. Parpola 1988: 260f. and below, section 4.2).

#### 3.5.6. Buffalo Demon and Goddess Durgā

The autumnal *navarātri* 'nine-night' festival concludes with the 'tenth day of victory' (*vijaya-daśamī*): on this day, Durgā, the beautiful goddess of victory riding a lion, vanquished the arrogant black and ugly Buffalo Demon Mahiṣa Asura. This most important myth associated with the

warrior goddess seems to be related to the ancient Near Eastern theme of the 'contest' between lion and bull, symbolizing the eternal fight between the dualistic (opposing and complementary) forces of nature: day and night, light and darkness, life and death, fire and water, (the heat of) summer and (the coolness of) winter or rainy season, feminine and masculine, good and evil, divine and demonic. In some variants of the myth, the Buffalo demon woos the goddess, or becomes the bridegroom or husband of the goddess, to be slain by her after the marriage on finding out that he had deceived her. This is parallel to the myth connected with Inanna-Ištar and her slain and resurrected husband, and the associated 'sacred marriage' ritual.

The 'sacred marriage' ritual has an ancient Indian counterpart in the Vedic horse sacrifice, which replaces an older sacrifice of a human victim and belongs to the Vrātya rituals. Here the marriage to the goddess is 'consummated' after the victim is killed. The goddess is represented by the chief queen called *mahiṣī* 'she-buffalo', so it is possible that her mate (who represented the sacrificing king) was originally *mahiṣa* 'he-buffalo'. According to the Ṛgveda, hundreds of buffaloes were sacrificed to Indra before the battle, but later the buffalo is almost exclusively sacrificed to Goddess Durgā, and quite particularly on the 'tenth day of victory'. The victim of the 'preclassical' human sacrifice (*puruṣamedha*) represents also the 'primeval man' (*puruṣa*), whose dissected body becomes the universe: he is the lecherous creator god Prajāpati, who is killed in punishment for his sin of incest with his own beautiful young daughter, identified as the goddess of dawn, Uṣas, and daughter of the sun, Sūryā, Sāvitrī, or Voice/Sound (*vāc*). An early variant of this myth seems to be the incest of Yama (the first man to die who therewith became the King of the dead) with his twin sister Yamī. (See Parpola 1983; 1992; 1998; 1999.)

### 3.5.7. Durgā as the goddess of the fortress (*durga*)

Goddess Durgā is said to have got her name from the demon (*asura*) slain by her, called Durga. The word *dur-ga-* as adjective means 'difficult or impossible to go to, inaccessible', and as a noun 'inaccessible place, stronghold, citadel, fortress' (attested from Ṛgveda 5,34,7 onwards), and 'adversity, danger' (she is *durga-ghnā-* 'remover of adversity'). In this explanation, Asura Durga replaces Mahiṣa Asura, the Buffalo Demon, and thus endorses the buffalo-headed (Cakra-)Śambara's identity with

'fortress' (*saṃ-vara*). In present-day Nepal, where Goddess Durgā occupies an important position as the guardian goddess of the country, the *navarātri* festival is always celebrated in a fortress. I have tried to show that also most of the other names of this feline-riding goddess are derived from various appellations for 'fortress': thus, for example, Durgā is called Śaraṇyā 'affording shelter or protection', from *śaraṇam* 'shelter, refuge, protection', whence Tamil and Malayalam *araṇ(am)* 'fortress, stronghold' (cf. also sections 3.5.8 and 3.6.1-3).

### 3.5.8. Nanā: The Mesopotamian goddess of Bactria

Goddess Durgā, specifically as the slayer of the Buffalo Demon, first appears in Indian iconography in early Kuṣāṇa times, c. AD 100, and the oldest securely datable text of her mythology is still later, the Durgā-Saptaśatī alias Devī-Māhātmya (included in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa) being a composition of the Gupta times (c. 5th century). Many scholars believe that Durgā was not present in India earlier, but was introduced by the Kuṣāṇas from Bactria.

There is a lot of evidence that the Kuṣāṇas worshipped in Bactria a lion-escorted goddess called Nanā (variants of her name include Nanay, Nanaya, Nanaia) (Figs. 21 and 23). On the basis of her iconography and name, many scholars have derived Nanā from the Near East, where several goddesses associated with the lion have existed from very ancient times, the most well known goddess being Sumerian Inanna identified with Akkadian Ištar, the goddess of war and fertility. However, as Daniel Potts (2001) points out, Nanā (*Na-na-a[-a]*), possibly to be read also Nanaya, is mentioned in cuneiform documents as a goddess that is not identical with Inanna-Ištar: Nanā was the daughter of Anu, the Sky God, and the wife of Nabû, whereas Ištar was the daughter of Sîn, the Moon God, and the wife of Anu. Nanā first appears in the Mesopotamian godlists in the Ur III period (c. 2100-2000 BC), theologically classified in the same section as Inanna. Potts plausibly suggests that Nanā came to Bactria in the Bronze Age with the lapis lazuli trade by the end of the third millennium BC, and that she came via Elam, more exactly via Susa, where many objects of Bactrian origin have been found. Four or five Greek inscriptions at Susa mention Nanā and Potts marshalls other evidence suggesting that this goddess probably had a temple at Susa as early as Old Akkadian times (c. 2300 BC). The derivation of the Bactrian Nanā from the Mesopotamian



Fig. 21. Goddess Nanâ seated upon a lion. A Kuṣāṇ intaglio seal now in the British Museum (after Rosenfield 1967: Fig. 10). The goddess appears to hold in her hands a bill-hook or slaughtering knife (for chopping off the head of human and animal victims) and a skull bowl (for drinking wine, or the blood of the sacrificed victim), these being attributes of the goddess Durgā.

Nanâ is made very plausible by the discovery of many BMAC seals depicting a winged goddess escorted by lions (cf. Fig. 22), along with many other art motifs that are clearly of Near Eastern or Elamite derivation (cf. Amiet 1986). In face of the fact that 2000 years after the Kuṣāṇas there were shrines in Afghanistan dedicated to 'Bibi Nanni' (Potts 2001: 31), it is not difficult to believe that the name Nanâ could have survived in Bactria for 2000 years before the Kuṣāṇas.

Although Potts insists on the difference of character between the most amiable Nanâ and the most cruel Iṣtar, I find it difficult to believe that the



Fig. 22. Winged goddess with lions on a golden compartmented seal of the BMAC (after Ligabue and Salvatori 1989: photo 58).

lion-escorted Nanâ is not just a variant of Inanna. In tablets found in the Temple of Marduk at Babylon, NANA was described as

*Lady of ladies, goddess of goddesses, directress of mankind, mistress of the spirits of heaven, possessor of sovereign power; the light of heaven and earth, daughter of the Moon God, ruler of weapons, arbitress of battles; goddess of love; the power over princes and over the scepter of kings* (Rosenfield 1967: 85, italics added).

The Bactrian Nanâ wears also the mural crown (cf. Fig. 23), which puts her in the same category as e.g. the martial goddess Iṣtar-Šawuška of Nuzi, who in the 19th century BC is implored as 'Mistress of the city wall' (cf. Hörig 1979: 187) — 'Mistress of the city wall' (*bêlêt ḫiṣāri*) figures also in a list of deities from Mari in Syria at the same date (Hörog 1979: 187) — and the thoroughly Iṣtar-like Durgā, goddess of victory and sexual love, who is associated with the fortress (cf. section 3.5.7) and who is identified with Bactrian Nanâ.





Fig. 23. Goddess Nanâ seated on lion, holding the sun and the moon and a sceptre in three of her four hands and wearing the mural crown, depicted on a 7th century bowl from Choresmia, now in the British Museum (after Azarpay 1976: Fig. 6).

### 3.5.9. Harappan 'Proto-Durgā'

There is so little evidence of weapons and militarism in the Indus Civilization that Jane McIntosh has entitled her forthcoming textbook on this culture *A peaceful realm*, and a similar opinion is emphatically expressed by J. M. Kenoyer in his recent book (1998). Against this background, the depiction of a goddess riding a tiger and taking by the hand two soldiers who are spearing each other on a BMAC-type cylinder seal from Kalibangan (cf. Fig. 24) rather suggests that this militaristic motif may have been introduced by a new, Aryan-speaking élite coming from Bactria and taking control in the valley. Yet the style of carving and the Indus inscription on this seal is native Harappan, and the hairdress of the soldiers borrowed from Old Akkadian Mesopotamia.

The famous 'fig-deity' seal from Mohenjo-Daro is also in carved in native Harappan style and has an inscription with a sequence implying native Harappan (Dravidian) language. Yet it seems to depict a human sacrifice of a warrior (hero) to the goddess of war and fertility, a predecessor of Durgā (cf. Parpola 1994: chapter 14). Could this theme and ritual also be ascribed to Bactrian infiltration? There is one important detail in this seal that seems to support such a hypothesis: the prominent



Fig. 24. Impression of a BMAC-type cylinder seal from the Harappan site of Kalibangan in northern India (after CISI I: 311, no. K-65 a).

depiction of a markhor goat (*Capra falconeri*), an animal which is native to the mountain region of the Hindukush, but not to the Indus Valley. The markhor plays a prominent role in the Kāfir religion of Nūristān, and is, next to man, the animal most appreciated as a sacrificial victim by Goddess Durgā (see section 3.6.2); the next rank is held by the buffalo, the sacrifice of which (by spearing) is depicted on several Indus seals and sealings.

The only inscribed Indus seal discovered at the Harappan settlement of Shortughai in Bactria contains two pictograms, depicting (in the reading order) number 3 (three short strokes in a row) and 'palisade, defensive wall'. This sign sequence, which occurs also in texts coming from the Indus Valley, reminds one of the concept of Tripura (section 3.5.3); in Old Tamil texts, there are synonymous compounds (with native Dravidian terms) used of shrines of the Goddess.

### 3.5.10. *Vāc* as the Vrātya goddess of victory and fertility

The gap between the BMAC/Indus Civilization and the Kuṣāṇa times is bridged by the Vedic Goddess *Vāc* 'Voice, Sound', who is one of the principal divinities worshipped in the Vrātya rituals (especially the Mahāvratā), and praised as the paramount force of the universe as early as



a (late = 'Atharvavedic') hymn of the R̥gveda (10,125). In the Brāhmaṇa texts, Vāc, daughter/wife of the creator god Prajāpati, is associated with lions and victory; her name Vāc comes among other things from her association with the sounds of war, such as the sound of the war-drum, the trumpet, and destructive mantras (cf. Parpola 1999). The Vedic and Epic goddess Sūryā Sāvitrī is another early double of Durgā, worshipped especially in the northwest and associated with ancient 'sacred marriage' cult and the practice of *satī* (see Parpola 1998). Sūryā Sāvitrī's name suggests kinship with the Scythian goddess Tabiti.

### 3.6. The 'Kāfir' fortress

#### 3.6.1. Kōṭṭa 'fortress'

Instead of great fortresses of the *qala* type, the Kāfirs of Nuristan have watch towers, the name of which comes from Old Indo-Aryan *kōṭṭa*- 'fort' (cf. CDIAL 3500). This word forms the final element in many placenames which are distributed mainly in two regions of the Indian subcontinent: on the one hand, the extreme northwest, and on the other hand Dravidian-speaking South India. It is generally thought to be of Dravidian etymology (cf. DEDR 2207). The Dravidian words no doubt go back to Proto-Dravidian, but still I suspect the etymon to be of Aryan origin. The aspiration in Kashmiri (*kūṭh*, dative *kūṭas* 'fort'), Assamese (*kōṭh* 'palisade'), Marathi (*koṭ*, *koṭh* 'fort'), and Newari (*kvāṭha* 'fort') suggests that it may come from Sanskrit (Atharvavedic Kauśikasūtra and Epic) *kōṣṭha*- 'store-room, granary, treasury' (cf. CDIAL 3546). This is in agreement with the use of the defensive towers of the *qala* fortresses in Afghanistan as store-rooms (cf. Szabo and Barfield 1991: 166-195). The assimilation and disaspiration of Old Indo-Aryan *kōṣṭha*- into *kōṭṭa*- is expected to result if the word was borrowed by early Dravidian speakers who, as Harappans, formed the predominant linguistic substratum of the Greater Indus Valley. The word *kōṣṭha*- itself may likewise have come into being under the influence of Proto-Dravidian (which lacked initial voiced stops) from Old Indo-Aryan *gōṣṭhā*- 'cow-house, cattle-yard, cow-pen', literally, 'the place where cattle stand' (CDIAL 4336). Cattle are kept in the courtyards of the *qala* in Afghanistan, as they were kept inside the Dāsa fortresses in R̥gvedic times.

From the word *kōṭṭa*-/*kōṭa*- 'fortress' are derived further names of Goddess Durgā, namely *kōṭeśvarī* 'mistress of the fort' and *Kōṭṭavī*. It is true

that for the latter word the native Sanskrit lexica record the sense of 'naked woman', but in both Rājataranginī 5,440 and in Harivaṃśa 112, 49 and 97, where this meaning occurs, it is a manifestation of the goddess that is involved. According to the Kālikā-Purāṇa (66,86-90 and 67,63-67), Goddess Tripurā is to be meditated as being naked. The Vāmana-Purāṇa (37,54), moreover, records that Kōṭṭavī is the ancient name of the (feline-faced) goddess Carcikā worshipped with phallic rites and a serpent cult at Hingulāja in south Baluchistan, a volcanic site where vermilion or cinnabar (*hiṅgula*) is obtained; and according to the Kālikā-Purāṇa (56,31), 'of the unguents applied to the body, vermilion causes the greatest delight to the goddess'. (Cf. Parpola 1988: 258f.)

#### 3.6.2. Fortress of Goddess Disani

Georg Morgenstierne (1951: 182-3) recorded a Kati hymn addressed to Disani, the most important Kāfir goddess, called here 'the (divine) priestess':

5. Disani thou didst rise (?) and enter into the peak of the Utine rock.
6. Thou didst make a golden castle [*sūnu kuṭ*], with four corners.
7. Thou didst begin to straighten out the golden corners.
8. Golden bells sounded.
9. (She) placed there seven doors turned outwards.
10. One door towards the gorge of the Lake.
11. One door towards...
16. One door towards Mount Divine in Ktiwi.
17. Outside, in Asmar (?), there is a log-cabin, a golden log-cabin.
18. Golden bells tinkled ding-dong.

Karl Jettmar (1986: 69) notes that according to Prasun texts,

Disni constructed a tower from which she built seven lanes leading outwards. One of these was made of gold, another of silver, the third of silk, the fourth of red silk, and the fifth of green (the sixth and seventh were not described). That evokes a circular ground-plan with roads radiating from the center. The 'nine gates of mercy' — which are in the care of Disni [addressed as 'the protector of the gates of God' in the same song] — according to a text collected by Edelberg

(1972: 76) — would fit in the same design (Jettmar 1986: 69; cf. 1981: 227).

Jettmar (1981: 226f) has already compared the Dashly-3 temple-fortress (Fig. 19) with the divine fortress of Disani. Reminders of many fireplaces filled with animal bones inside the round rampart at Dashly-3 indicate roasting of meat for a feast like the Kafir mid-winter festival (Jettmar 1981: 223-226). The long temporal interval is bridged by the survival of a very similar temple-fortress with three concentric circular walls at Kutlug-Tepe in the nearby oasis of Farukabad in southern Bactria, Afghanistan; it dates from the Achaemenid times, more than a thousand years after Dashly-3 (cf. Jettmar 1981: 223). The nine towers of the innermost wall have a parallel in the 'nine towers topping the outer ring wall of Koy-Krylgan-Kala' in Choresmia, which is 'usually considered a temple-mausoleum' (Jettmar 1981: 223). I would further compare them with the *Nava-Durgā*, the nine manifestations of Goddess Durgā, who protect the eight directions of space and the centre, worshipped especially in Nepal (cf. Gutschow and Basukala 1987; Levy 1987), but also in South India (cf. Parpola 1999).

Seven, which alternates with nine as the number of gates in Disani's fortress, can be explained from the fact that among the Ashkun Kāfirs, Disani is one of Indra's seven daughters (Jettmar 1986: 135); elsewhere in Kāfiristān, seven daughters of the highest god Imra (Yama-rāja) alias Māra were worshipped (see section 4.4). Disani is also considered to have been born out of the creator god Imra's breast and to be the wife of Gish, the fierce god of war. The seven daughters of Māra can be compared with the 'seven mothers' of the Hindu war-god Skanda; these goddesses, identified with seven heavenly dancing girls (*apsaras*), follow Skanda on war his expeditions, rather like the prostitutes who follow the Vrātyas on their expeditions in Vedic texts (see sections 2.3.3 and 4.2).

Disani resembles Vāc, the Vedic/Vrātya goddess of victory, the daughter and wife of the creator god Prajāpati (cf. section 3.5.10), and the Hindu goddess Durgā. For Disani is also

known to excite sexual desire, the prerequisite of procreation... Disani is at the same time a deity of death... who takes the deceased home into the house of the Great Mother... the women pray to her when they fear for the lives of their men who participate in a

war-party (Jettmar 1986: 69)...Disani can appear as a wild [markhor] goat... She is armed when in human form, and allegedly carries a bow and quiver. In another story, she kills with a dagger (Jettmar 1986: 70).

Among the Ashkun Kāfirs, who 'greatly feared' her,

Disani was invoked as mistress of the animals almost everywhere to protect the herds in the high pasture. She could change herself into a [markhor] goat, for which reason she was often called *Atali Disani*, 'Disani of the crossed horns' (Klimburg 1986: 124).

I have emphasized Disani's connection with the wild markhor goat, because this mighty beast is restricted to the Hindukush and other mountains of the northwest (cf. also section 3.5.9). Kati *śurū* and its Dardic and Sindhi cognates denoting 'markhor' go back to Sanskrit *śarabhā/śalabha*, but although Kālidāsa knew the *śarabha* as an animal that makes bold jumps high into air in the mountains of the northwest (cf. *Meghadūta* 54), generally the original meaning was no more understood in classical Sanskrit, where *śarabha* denotes a 'fabulous eight-legged animal, a match for lions and elephants'. In addition to the northwest, the word has survived in the Neo-Indo-Aryan languages of the north (Kashmiri, Panjabi, Pahari, Kumaoni, Nepali and dialects of Hindi) as well as in the Sinhalese, but changed in them to mean another jumping animal, namely 'locust, grasshopper' (Cf. CDIAL 12331; 12347). In spite of this, the *Kālikā-Purāṇa* (57,6) written in Assam around AD 1000, in enumerating the male animals that may be offered to Goddess Durgā/Kālī, places the *śarabha* on the highest level, second only to man. The markhor figures also in the Vedic (Vrātya) fire altar ritual among the 'wild' victims, which include also a harp-playing war-bard (cf. Parpola 1983; 1992).

The victim of the Vedic human sacrifice, like that of the horse sacrifice modelled on it, represents the youthful war god, personified by a war-bard, who when killed unites with the Goddess in a 'sacred marriage'. This ritual of fertility and resurrection seems to have come from the Near Eastern cults of Inanna-Ištar (see Parpola 1983; 1992; 1998; 1999). Jettmar (1986: 71) relates a Kāfir parallel in which Disani by mistake beheads her own son whom the gods persecute because he had planted grape-vines, pomegranates and nut-trees without their permission; the gods appease

Disani by instituting a feast, where bold youths compete with each other in dancing around a harp-player singing dirges. Jettmar connects this not only with the 'ceremonial mourning, mostly in springtime, for the sake of a cruelly murdered young deity' but also with 'the more cruel aspects of Śiva's consort'. He compares Disani as huntress and as the embodiment of the markhor goat also to Pārvātī as the goddess of mountains.

Disani thus appears to be yet another manifestation of Durgā. This Kāfir goddess is also prominently associated with the fortress. Could her name, too, be explained in the same way as so many other names of the goddess (cf. sections 3.5.3; 3.5.7; 3.7.1), by deriving it from some word denoting 'fortress'?

### 3.6.3. Etymology of Disani's name

Georg Morgenstierne (1953: 164) suggested (with a question mark) that the name of the Kāfir goddess Dis(a)ni might be related to the Vedic goddess Dhiṣāṇā known from some references in the Ṛgveda and in the Brāhmaṇa texts. Pointing to the similarity in the functions of these two goddesses, Dis(a)ni being among other things a goddess of milk and fertility and Dhiṣāṇā 'a goddess of wealth', Fussman (1977: 32f) in his examination of this etymology concluded that it can be considered as certain; it has been taken as certain also by Turner (CDIAL 6813), Parpola (1974: 97), Parkes (1986: 151) and Mayrhofer (1992: I, 791f). Ferdinand Johansson (1919) derived Dhiṣāṇā's name from the root *dhi-/dhay-* 'to breast-feed, drink mother's milk' and connected Vedic Dhiṣāṇā as a goddess of breast-feeding and nourishment with the North Germanic goddess Dīs. However, Hermann Oldenberg (1919) has shown that the Vedic formulae rather suggest that *dhiṣāṇā-* is derived from the root *dhā-* 'to place'; the origin and exact meaning of the word and the goddess remain debated (see Mayrhofer).

Usually the name of the Kāfir goddess is cited as Disani (an approximation of Kati *Disāñri*) or Disni (for Prasun *Disnī/Dīsñī*). However, the Prasun name is a borrowing from Kati (cf. CDIAL addenda p. 831); this might be the case with Ashkun *Dāsāni*, too, for in addition to being the name of a goddess it denotes 'ogress' (possibly from her being an enemy goddess). In Kati itself, the name has *z* instead of *s* in the eastern, more archaic Kamdeshi and Urtsun dialects, *Dízāñri* and *Dízāñri*, respectively (cf. Morgenstierne 1953: 164); moreover, Robertson (1896: 410f.)

records the name as *Dizane*, and M. Elphinstone in 1839 as *Dissaune*. There is thus good basis for a different etymology: I propose to connect Dizani (*sic!*) with Old Persian *didā-* (<\**dizā-*) f. 'wall, palisade, fortress', Bactrian *λίζα/λίζο* (<\**dizā*) 'fortress', and Middle and Modern Persian *diz* 'fortress', and further (with full grade) Sanskrit *dehī-* f. 'wall' (in RV 6.47.2 of the 99 walls of Śambara demolished by Indra) and Greek *τείχος* n., *τοιχος* m. 'wall'; these words are from the Indo-European root \**dheig'h-* 'to knead mud and make wall or pottery out of it; form, create', cf. i. a. Kāfir (Kati) *diz-*, *dez-* 'to create, build' and the instruction of Ahura Mazdāh to Yima how he should build the *var-* 'fortress' in Vidēvdāt 2.31. (Cf. Pokorny 1959/I: 244f; Mayrhofer 1992/I: 746f; LIV: 121-3).

Kāfir Disani/Dizani thus seems to be a goddess protecting the fort, and her name agrees with Proto-Iranian \**dizā* 'fortress' which in turn is related to the Greek word for 'wall'. If the Kāfirs are of Pre-Proto-Iranian origin and come from the Poltavka culture, it is relevant to note that the Catacomb Grave culture, neighbour of Poltavka and possibly Pre-Proto-Greek speaking, also had fortresses of circular form and with multiple walls, such as that on the isle of Bayda alias Mala Khortitsa on the Dnieper (cf. Fig. 20 in Pustovalov 1994: 113-5). The 'fortress-town' of Arkaim in the southern Urals has already (in section 3.5.3) been compared to the BMAC 'temple-fort' of Dashly-3 in Bactria: both have multiple circular walls (cf. Figs. 19-20).

## 4. The 'Kāfir' religion: Scythian, Vratya and Śākta Tantric parallels

### 4.1. Head-hunting and drinking out of a skull

According to Herodotus (4.64), the Scythian warrior always cut off the heads of the enemies he had slain and carried them to his king, because the heads alone entitled him to a share of the booty. His esteem also depended upon the number of enemies he had killed, and this he exhibited by hanging their scalps from his bridle-rein, or making himself a cloak by sewing many scalps together. Others covered their quivers with the skin flayed from the right arm of the enemy. Herodotus devotes a full chapter (4.65) to describing how the Scythians made enemy skulls into drinking cups, which were handed around when they had any worthy visitors, the host telling its story. Moreover, once a year the ruler of each district

mingles a bowl of wine, of which all Scythians have a right to drink by whom foes have been slain; while they who have slain no enemy are not allowed to taste of the bowl, but sit aloof in disgrace. No greater shame than this can happen to them. Such as have slain a very large number of foes, have two cups instead of one, and drink from both (Herodotus 4,66; transl. Rawlinson 1942: 316).

These Scythian habits are likely to go back to the Bronze Age, for they have a close parallel among the Celts, though admittedly there was also historical contact between the two:

The archaeological and artistic evidence for the head cult among the Celts is too extensive to catalog briefly... Classical authors confirm the archaeological testimony. According to Posidonius... the Celts returned from battle with the heads of their defeated enemies hanging from the necks of their horses. The heads of their most distinguished opponents they embalmed in cedar oil... to be displayed proudly to their visitors, and in some instances they used the skull of a distinguished enemy as a vessel for sacred libations... [in] the insular Celtic literatures... the return of the hero carrying the heads of his foes as trophies is a commonplace (MacCana 1987: 225).

Among the Ashkun Kāfirs, too, a man is worth nothing until he has killed an enemy. The more people he has killed, the higher his rank, which is exhibited by various symbols. Various titles are earned after 4, 8 and 12 kills; garments of honour with embroidered ornamentation and with bells hanging from the belt and trousers, and so on. A man with four kills was allowed to erect in the main gathering place of the village a post in which each kill was recorded with a willow twig put through a hole, the top being decorated with a red cloth. This social ranking system led to regular head-hunting expeditions; the trophies, especially severed heads, scalps or ears, were brought back to the village in a triumphant procession and exhibited during the victory feast. (cf. Klimburg 1986: 126; for similar habits among the other Kāfirs, see Jettmar 1986: 26-28; and Jones 1986: 116).

Successful Ashkun warriors could further increase their esteem by giving feasts. The greatest honours were enjoyed by men with at least four kills who gave three big feasts within three years. They could sit on a seat of honour and drink wine from a silver goblet. If a man owned more than

one silver goblet, they were pierced and laid over one another in a wooden stretcher, crowned by a goblet still with a base (cf. Klimburg 1986: 126-7). This parallels the Scythian custom with two wine cups. On the basis of their form, the rare silver wine cups of the Kāfirs may have come to Afghanistan and Sogdiana with the Hephthalite and Gurjara nomads in the latter half of the first millennium BC (cf. Jettmar 1975: 86, 468; 1986: 136). But already the BMAC culture had exquisite wine cups of gold and silver (cf. Amiet 1986: 196, 200f., 322-329, Figs. 193-202; Jarrige 1987; 1991). I have little doubt that it was the early ancestors of the Kāfirs who mediated the Scythian tradition of skull-cups to South Asia, where it is a prominent attribute of the fierce Tantric deities of Śākta and Śaiva affinity. The Ashkun have until recently had a skull cult: there was a 'determined effort to bring back into the village at least the head of a relative killed far away. Looted heads were kept carefully for exchange' (Klimburg 1986: 127). The word used for the skull-cup in Tantric and Purāṇic sources is *kapāla-*, found in the sense of 'skull' in the Atharvaveda (9,8,22; 10,2,8; 15,18,4 *śīrṣa-kapāla-*), while the Hiraṇyakeśi-Gr̥hyasūtra speaks of demons 'drinking out of skulls' (2,3,7 *kapāla-pa-*); the word is attested in Middle and Modern Persian as *kabārag/kabāra* 'bowl', and Lubotsky (2001) suggests it is of BMAC origin.

In the classical Vedic ritual the sacrificial victim was not beheaded; but the Brāhmaṇa literature is replete with references to 'the head of the sacrifice' (see Heesterman 1967; 1985: 45-58). Some texts even make it plain that originally the 'demons' (*asura*) cut off the head of the sacrifice (i.e. the sacrificial victim), and the gods (*deva*) out of fear did not go near. Although bloodshed and open sexuality has mostly been eliminated from the Vedic ritual, there are some rituals, such as building the 'fire altar' (*agni-citi*), where heads of five different sacrificial victims are required. According to Baudhāyana-Śrautasūtra 10,9, the human head and the horse head placed in the foundation of the altar are those of enemies killed in battle (*saṃgrāme hatayor aśvasya ca vaiśyasya ca*; cf. Heesterman 1985: 53 and 55). It is very significant that in the Veda the 'head of the sacrifice' is often connected with a demon decapitated by Indra, and that they are associated with an originally non-Vedic cultic drink that contrasts with Indra's own drink Soma: this is the case with the horse-headed *Dadhyañc*, who is associated with *madhu* 'honey-drink, mead; wine' (the drink of the divine horseman twins Aśvins who originally had no share in the Soma sacrifice). The Scythians of Herodotus, the Kāfirs, and the Śākta Tāntrikas drink wine or some other alcoholic drink, not Soma.



In north Bactria, remains of grapes/raisins and jujube fruits (still locally used for the fermentation of alcoholic drinks) have been found in BMAC jars given as grave goods (cf. Askarov 1993). Significantly, three different names of the jujube are mentioned in the Brāhmaṇa texts, always in the context of the Sautrāmaṇī ritual, in which the cultic drink is the beer-like *surā* associated with the demon Namuci, while it is told that Indra became sick of drinking it (cf. e.g. ŚB 5,5,4,10; 12,7,1,3; 12,7,2,9; 12,9,1,8). As we shall see (in section 4.4), Namuci can be identified with the Kāfir god Imra (Yama-rāja) alias Māra.

In the Tantric tradition, blood is also drunk from skull-cups, and the frame-story of the Vetāla-Pañcaviṃśatikā tells of the Tantric sorcery ritual in which the breast of the victim is torn up and the heart is pulled out. Gory incidents along these lines are known from the Lamaist tradition (cf. Aalto 1996). This ritual seems to go back to ancient warrior traditions, for in the Mahābhārata (e.g. 2,68,21-22) the epic heroes swear that they are ready to give up an afterlife in the paradise where their forefathers have gone if they do not rip up the chest of their enemy and drink his blood in battle. According to Herodotus (4,64), the Scythian warriors drink the blood of the first enemy he has killed in battle. The 'head-hunting' Ashkun Kāfirs are also supposed to have drunk blood at their sacrifices (cf. Klimburg 1986: 124).

#### 4.2. Warring expeditions, Vrātyas and the cakrapūjā

The Kāfirs offer bloody sacrifices, mostly of goats and cattle, where the victim's head is severed from the body. Once a year they also used to sacrifice a horse (cf. Jettmar 1986: 92f). The Vedic horse sacrifice incorporated a year-long raiding expedition led by the chief victim; it ended in the 'sacred marriage' of this stallion and the principal queen of the sacrificing king. The other wives of the king along with their maids-in-waiting danced three rounds around the uniting couple, while the priests and the main queen uttered obscene mantras. The Vrātya-stomas are sacrifices connected with the beginning and end of raiding expeditions by Vrātyas, bands of men united by a vow (*vrata*) (cf. Heesterman 1962). Their orgiastic character is suggested by the fact that the Vrātyas are accompanied by a prostitute (*pumścalī*) and a bard from Magadha (AV 15,2). In the Vedic new year rite Mahāvratā, which is likewise of Vrātya origin, these two persons exchange obscene abuses and perform sexual intercourse. AĀ

5,1,5 indicates that the Mahāvratā once involved sexual unions of various animal couples as well; this agrees with one BMAC seal showing the mating of a human couple and several different animal couples (cf. Parpola 1994: 256). In the Mahāvratā, there is also a dance of *dāsī* maidens around the fire; all sorts of musical instruments are played, drums, pipes and especially a hundred-stringed harp; and many other acts equally unusual for a Vedic ritual take place (cf. Rolland 1973).

I have argued for the identity of the Vedic Vrātya-stomas with Hindu the navarātri/vijayadaśamī festival of Durgā as the goddess of victory, as it is associated with the beginning of the war expeditions, and includes feasting with meat of sacrificial victims and with alcohol, obscene abuses, and sexual intercourse (cf. Parpola 1988; 1992; 1998; 1999). It is certainly connected with the notorious 'circular worship' (*cakra-pūjā*) of Śākta Tantrism, where the goddess is worshipped by couples including 'heroes' (*vira*) and their mates, who may belong to any caste or even be their own mothers or daughters: they indulge in eating meat, fish and cereals, drinking alcohol and sexual intercourse. In 1859, H.G. Raverty described the feast celebrated by the Kāfirs before a raiding expedition, in which feasting and dancing is

kept up with great spirit, until about midnight, when on a given signal, the lights are suddenly extinguished; the men rush on the women; and each man seizes the hand of the nearest female, or one whom he may have selected beforehand, if he can manage to approach her in the scuffle which now ensues. He then takes her away to some private place and retains her until the morning. On these occasions it makes very little difference who the fair one is, whether his own wife or that of another — his own daughter or sister or another's (Raverty 1859: 353f; cf. Jettmar 1986: 106).

This is by no means the only occasion when sexual promiscuity takes place in Kāfir ceremonies (cf. Jettmar 1986: 103-109). Its purpose here seems to be to make sure that offspring is generated even if all men should perish on the expedition.

The Vedic texts prescribe that plenty of food should be served on the Mahāvratā day (PB 5,6,9; AĀ 5,1,5). It thus resembles the Kāfir feast. At the Mahāvratā the Chanter priest, who plays the harp, also sits on a throne-seat (*āsandī*), which the Atharvaveda associates with the Eka-



Vrātya. It compares with the seat of honour as one of the symbols of the men of highest rank among the Kāfirs.

#### 4.3. Ceremonial axes: Kāfirs and the BMAC

The high-ranking Kāfir man — who had killed at least four enemies — ‘always danced in grand attire with a ceremonial axe in his right hand’ (Klimburg 1986: 126). The Kāfir dance axes (see Edelberg and Jones 1979: 107, Fig. 48 and Pl. 101) are of a special type which is spread throughout the Hindukush region and can be traced back to petroglyphs made there at the end of the first millennium AD. The Kāfirs may well have adopted this particular shape for their dance axe from the outside world at that time, as suggested by Karl Jettmar (1986: 136). But their tradition of having dance axes as symbols of rank and power is likely to go back to the BMAC, where one of the most characteristic grave goods consists precisely of metal axes often provided with magnificent decorations (cf. Fig. 25). There can be little doubt that they had a ceremonial function and were not used as real weapons of war. In the ancient Near East, including Elam of the 20th century BC, seals of high officials depict them receiving from the king such axes as symbols of power, which eventually accompanied them to the grave (cf. Amiet 1986: 152ff and 276, Figs. 83-84).

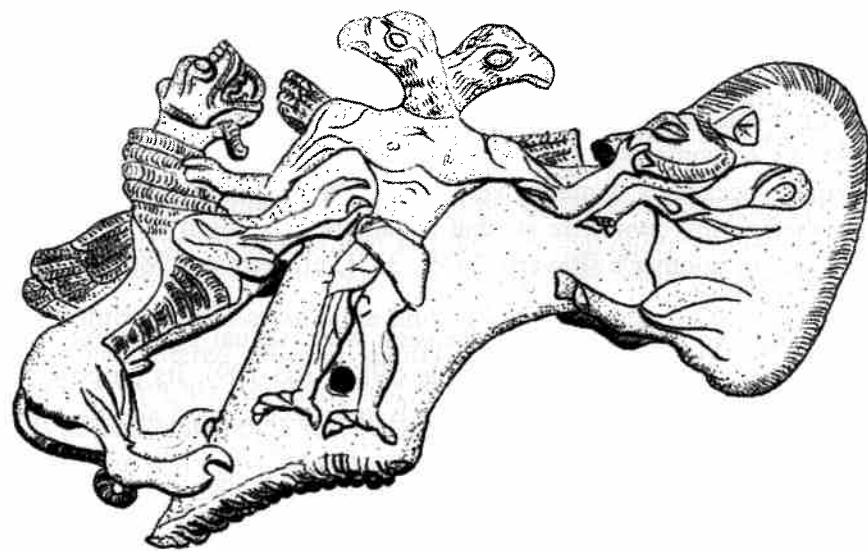


Fig. 25. A ceremonial axe-head of the BMAC (after Amiet 1986: Fig. 173).

The ceremonial axes of the Kāfirs are called in Kati *waślīk* (cf. Edelberg and Jones 1979: 185b): this word (missing in CDIAL) and its cognates in other Kāfir languages are related to Sanskrit *vāśī-* ‘axe, adze, sharp-pointed knife’ (cf. CDIAL 11588; Parpola 1988: 245) attested in the Ṛgveda (only in books 8, 5, 1 and 10), as a weapon of Agni and of the Maruts, as a tool of Tvaṣṭar (with which he fashions things like the sages fashion poems), some contexts reminding however of Kāfir offerings with dance: 8,19,23 ‘When ghee is offered to him, Agni (Fire) moves his axe up and down; like the Asura (you put) on your festive garment’ (thus following Geldner 1951/II: 321). The word is found also in Yasna 42,4: *vāśī* ‘sharp-pointed knife’ (?), and Ossetic *wəs* ‘axe for splitting wood’ (cf. Mayrhofer 1996/II: 548); Lubotsky (2001) suspects this word to be a loan from the BMAC language.

#### 4.4. The Kāfir god Imra/Māra and the Vrātya god Mṛtyu

In 1977, Gérard Fussman summarized and discussed the etymologies proposed by Georg Morgenstierne (1949; 1953) and Georg Buddruss (1960) for the gods of the Kāfir pantheon and other important religious terms (see now also Parkes 1986). Fussman concluded that the Kāfir religion resembled the Old Indo-Aryan religion much more than the Iranian religion. In my opinion, the Kāfir religion differed from the Ṛgvedic religion in many respects.

The most remarkable fact, to which we shall return soon, is that the supreme deity of the Kāfir pantheon is Imra < \*Yama-rāja who, in accordance with the ancient Indo-Iranian conception, is the king of the dead and rules in a heavenly paradise. Indra does figure in the Kāfir pantheon, but has a very subordinate position; there are in fact legends about Indra having been defeated by the fierce Kāfir god of war, Gish. Only among the Ashkun in south Kāfiristan does Indra have the overlord position of Imra; however, he has there a vineyard, though Indra’s original drink is not wine but Soma. Another indication that south Kāfiristan at some point of time (during the Ṛgvedic wars of Divodāsa?) came under the rule of Indra worshippers is the fact that the Ashkuns alone worship Blama-dē < Brahma-deva.

The name of the immensely popular Kāfir war god Gish goes back to \*Gaviṣá ‘desirous of cows, cattle-lifting’; although the synonymous *gavēṣaṇa-* occurs in the Ṛgveda as an epithet of the Vedic war-god Indra,

neither it nor Gaviṣā is used as the proper name of a god in Vedic texts. Similarly, the name of the Kāfir weather god Sud(a)ram, who is also the divine priest, corresponds to Sanskrit *su-dhárman-* 'maintaining well the law'; *sudharman* occurs in Middle Vedic texts as an epithet of the sun and the heated Pravargya pot (a symbol of the sun), and in Hindu texts as an epithet of Kṛṣṇa, but not as the proper name of a god. The Sanskrit counterpart (\*Bhāgyiṣṭha-) for Bagisht, the name of the god of waters, who helps people to become rich and powerful, is not at all attested in Sanskrit texts, though Bhaga 'share; good fortune' is a Vedic deity. The most important Kāfir goddess, Dis(a)ni, is thought to have a counterpart in Goddess Dhiṣāṇā of the Ṛgveda and Middle Vedic texts, but this goddess plays a very subordinate role in the Vedic religion, and the etymology does not seem to be correct (see section 3.6.3). Only one of the main Kāfir deities remains to be mentioned, namely Mon(i), 'worshipped more with respect than enthusiasm...traditionally, he is the god always selected by Imra to carry out his orders to exterminate demons, and so forth' (Robertson 1896: 399); this god has been taken over to the Kāfir pantheon from the neighbouring Kalashas of Chitral, who speak an archaic Indo-Aryan language of the Dardic group. The Kalasha god of war, *Mahan dēu* 'the great god', equals the Vedic Rudra and Hindu Śiva.

The Kāfir overgod Imra (\*Yama-rāja) is also called *Māra* 'killer, death'. He has seven daughters worshipped as goddesses of fertility who protect agriculture and whose appellations go back to \*Yama-devī- and \*Māra-dujītar-. Georg Buddruss has drawn attention to the parallel offered by the Buddhist legend, in which Māra, the ruler of the phenomenal world, in vain tries to prevent the Śākyamuni from attaining enlightenment by sending his terrible armies to threaten him and then his three charming daughters to seduce him (cf. Jettmar 1975: 72f). Fussman (1977: 51, 57) stressed that the oldest Buddhist texts are silent about this legend, which appears only in texts belonging to the Maurya period or later, i.e. just at the moment when Buddhism starts to infiltrate to the regions in the northwest, close to Kāfiristān. In the northwest this legend has been most popular in the iconography as well, being represented in so many reliefs of the Gandhāra art. Fussman therefore thinks that it was only in this region that Māra was a very important god of the folk religion, for Sakka (= Indra) occupies this position in the pre-Buddhist folk religion elsewhere.

In older Pāli sources such as the Padhānasutta, *Māra* is called Namuci (cf. Windisch 1895: 185). In the Ṛgveda, Namuci is a 'demoniac' (*āsura*) Dāsa, vanquished by Indra. In ṚV 10,131,4-5 and in the Brāhmaṇa texts Namuci makes Indra sick with the alcoholic *surā*, which they drink together after having made a pact of friendship; but after the Aśvins healed Indra, he beheaded Namuci (see also section 4.1). Indra kills Namuci in a very peculiar manner: he twirls off the head of Namuci (RV 5,30,8b = 6,20,6b *śīro dāsasya nāmucer mathāyān*; 5,30,7cd *ātrā dāsasya nāmuceḥ śīro yād āvartayo*; cf. Macdonell 1897: 162). This detail provides a striking and so far unnoticed connection with the Kāfirs, in whose bloody sacrifice 'the Uta kills the animal by cutting its throat...The head is then separated by twisting' (Jettmar 1986: 92). The Ṛgvedic Aryans must have seen the Dāsa method of sacrifice when, on their way to India over the Afghan highlands, they at some point had a truce with the enemies and participated in their feast. The *Māra* = Namuci equation thus points to Kāfiristān, most probably to the conquest of the southern area around Wama inhabited by the Ashkun speakers, the only Kāfirs worshipping Indra as the head of the pantheon.

Yet Fussman's conclusion that the cult of *Māra* as a very important folk deity was restricted to Gandhāra seems to me mistaken. The researches of Windisch (1895) — cited by Fussman — have established beyond doubt that the 'evil Death' (*māro pāpimā*) of the Buddhist texts corresponds to the synonymous deity called *pāpmā mṛtyuḥ* in the Atharvaveda and Middle Vedic texts, where he is equated with Yama and Śarva (= Rudra; cf. AV 6,93,1; Windisch 1895: 185ff). Mṛtyu corresponds to Pāli Maccu, and some early Buddhist texts speak of this deity as a king, Maccu-rāja and Mṛtyu-rāj, providing thus a counterpart to the Kāfir name Imra and to Yama-rājan- in RV 10,16,9 as well as to King Yima in the Avesta.

The Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa (2,69-70) relates a historical legend about a lengthy competition between two different kinds of sacrifice. One of the rivalling sacrifices is characterized by Sāmavedic songs, Ṛgvedic praise hymns and Yajurvedic priestly performances; the performer of this kind of sacrifice is said to be Prajāpati, the main god of the Middle Vedic period who often represents the priestly class of the Brahmins. It is obvious that the classical Vedic Soma sacrifice (where Indra is main deity) is meant. The other contestant is the sacrifice characterized by songs sung to the accompaniment of the harp (an integral part of the Vṛātya rituals, cf. Parpola in press a, section 1.6.3), by dance, and by what is performed for

pleasure (i.e. sexual intercourse); its performer is Mr̥tyu, 'Death'. This is clearly the archaic 'preclassical' ritual associated with the Vr̥tyas. Finally Prajāpati overcame Mr̥tyu, and Mr̥tyu's kind of sacrifice decayed, ceasing to exist (see Heesterman 1985: 32f; and Parpola 1988: 254).

The Vr̥tya type of ritual that is here contrasted with the Vedic Soma sacrifice corresponds in all essential features to the Kāfir way of worshipping gods. In the Kāfir religion, circular dances, heroic songs sung to the accompaniment of the 'Kāfir harp' (similar to the classical — not modern — Indian *vīṇā*, cf. Alvad 1954) play a very central role (cf. Jettmar 1986: 90-92), so the concordance between Kāfir Māra and (Atharva-)Vedic (Vr̥tya) Mr̥tyu is very significant indeed.

#### 4.5. The funeral monument and the yakṣa cult

The legend of Prajāpati's victory over Mr̥tyu and the disappearance of the Vr̥tya type of sacrifice is unfavourable to Fussman's hypothesis, because it

cannot be separated from the numerous stories of a similar sacrificial strife between victorious gods and losing asuras, said to be of common descent. That these divine actors represent their respective worshippers is clear from ŚB 13,8,1,5:

Four-cornered (is the sepulchral mound). Now the gods and asuras, both of them sprung from Prajāpati, were contending in the (four) regions. The gods drove out the asuras, their rivals and enemies, from the regions, and, being regionless, they were overcome. Wherefore the people who are godly make their burial-places four-cornered, whilst those who are devilish, the easterners and others, (make them) round, for they (the gods) drove them out of the regions... [cf. Eggeling 1900/V: 423f]

The Asura worshippers are here specified to be the easterners (*prā-cyāḥ*), that is, Magadhans...[cf. section 2.3.3]. The reference to their round burial mounds agrees with the round form of the stūpas in eastern India (Parpola 1988: 254).

The Gandhāra Graves of Swāt, which can be associated with the two waves of Ṛgvedic Aryans (see sections 1.2.4-5) are rectangular in shape

(cf. Müller-Karpe 1983: 23-51). They are in agreement with the above quoted passage of the ŚB and KŚS 21,3,28. It is significant, however, that the Atharvavedins prescribe a round or a rectangular shape for the funeral monument, preference being given to the circular form (cf. Kauśikasūtra 85,8... *parimaṇḍalāni caturasrāṇi vā śaunakinām*); these two alternatives are cited (from some lost Brāhmaṇa text) also in Āpastamba-Śulbasūtra 13 and HŚS 25,14, but in inverted order, the rectangular being prescribed first (cf. Caland 1896: 141f).

The building of the funeral monument and the burial of the vessel with the ashes or bones of the deceased is accompanied with ritual acts (see Caland 1896: 133-140) that are clearly connected with the Vr̥tya type of sacrifice. They include music (with harps, conches, pipes, flute, beating a metal vessel with an old shoe), songs and dances of male and female relatives as well as professional dancing women, and feasting. Sexual intercourse also takes place, at least symbolically. A *brahmabandhu* or a Śūdra asks the seniormost wife for sexual intercourse on behalf of her deceased husband; she denies twice but then agrees for one night. The vessel with the ashes or bones is placed under a tripod holding a pot with a hundred holes, and sour milk with curds is poured into it. This symbolic seed-laying is accompanied by a 'fanning' (*dhuvanam*) similar to that around the senior wife lying in 'sacred marriage' with the chief victim in the horse sacrifice (cf. ŚB 13,2,8,4).

Once again, the religion of the Ashkun Kāfirs provides not only a parallel but also important insight:

Finally, a Sunari Bahadur [a man with many kills and feast-givings] was given the greatest recognition that an Ashkun village could offer: during the first autumn of his death and after, a post (*del*), the size of a tree, was erected near his grave at the occasion of a great feast. The top of this del showed a schematic depiction of the deceased, crowned sometimes with a silver goblet. Holes bored in the del indicated the number of enemies killed. A del was a monument to a great ancestor who...was honoured by beating a great drum *mundoo* for the first five anniversaries following his death.

The highly developed ancestor cult stipulated the worship and depiction of the great ancestor in the interior of the house. Stylized heads, symbols of rank and general status symbols were carved into the four supporting columns...

The male spirits of the dead could...be identical with the well-known and often much feared spirits *Yush* or *Yosh*. This can be assumed from the human heads depicted in houses in Wama, called...*Žintse* heads...*Žintse*...is the Ashkun designation for *Yush*...

Benevolent *Žintse* were guardian spirits and entered men and protected them in martial conflict. A particularly successful warrior was thus believed to be protected by the *Žintse*.

Malevolent *Žintse* were thought to appear in the form of bears and thus feared. A bear killer was always greatly honoured, and bear heads carved in houses commemorated such successes. Benevolence from the spirits of the dead depended on regular food offerings and feast-giving. In Wama, torchlight processions and masked dances were arranged in honour of these spirits during the month of *Žintseimās* at winter solstice. This was presumably the great Ashkun feast of the dead and of winter, followed almost immediately by the New Year's feast. The *Chaumos* of the Kalash...were similar (Klimburg 1986: 127-8).

The Kāfir ritual provides important links to many directions: the post with the figure of the deceased links the Kāfir grave to the barrow burials of the Eurasiatic steppe, often topped by posts carrying a human figure; particularly important are those of the Copper Age (c. 4000-2000 BC) in the Pontic-Caspian steppes, as well as the Cimmerian and Scythian stelae of the early first millennium BC: many of these were clearly 'intended to mark the graves of distinguished warriors' (see Telegin and Mallory 1994: 66). The silver cup at the top of the Kāfir post can be compared to the 'umbrella' (*chattra*) at the top of the *yaṣṭi* erected on top of the *stūpa*.

The masked dances at winter solstice have a parallel *inter alia* in the Tantric mask dances (*cham*) performed by the Tibetans at the end of the year 'to purge the accumulated sins and mischances of the past and to clear the way for the year to come' (Richardson 1993: 116), and the masked dances performed while being possessed by a *bhūta* and a *teyyam* (<\**daiva*) in Tūlunāḍu and northern Kerala.

Most interesting is the Ashkun worship of great ancestors, who can help and protect their descendants; these ancestors have an exact counterpart in the Avestan *fravaši*- <\**pra-varti*- inherited by Zoroastrianism from the earlier 'pagan' religion (cf. Bartholomae 1904: 992-5; Boyce 1979: 15;

Mayrhofer 1996/II: 512). But it also gives a striking and so far overlooked explanation for the origin of the *yakṣa* cult in the pre-Buddhist folk religion, since Kāfir (Kati, Prasun) *yuṣ* has as its etymology *yakṣá-* (cf. CDIAL 10395). (Another source undoubtedly is the ancient Indian cult of sacred trees, especially fig trees, connected with snakes and spirits of fertility and death; for the Harappan evidence, cf. Parpola 1994: 234f.). The *yakṣas* are worshipped with rituals similar to those of the *Vrātyas* and *Kāfirs*. Moreover, the abode of a *yakṣa* is usually referred to as *caitya* (cf. Coomaraswamy 1928/I: 17ff); the early Pāli Suttas refer to *cetiya*s all over eastern India as places where the Buddha stayed and taught. The word *caitya* is derived from Sanskrit *citi* 'pile of stones or bricks'. The Vedic funeral monument is called either *śmaśāna-citi* or, because it was made of unbaked lumps of earth, *loṣṭa-citi* (cf. Caland 1896: 129f).

#### 4.6. The Vedic fire altar and the eagle

Only a man who had built a fire-altar (*agni-citi*) was considered entitled to a funeral monument (cf. Caland 1896: 129f). The close connection between these two kinds of monuments is underlined by the fact that it is Yama, the god of Death (and the highest god of the Kāfirs), who recommends to Naciketas the building of a fire altar as a means to overcome death in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad. I would like to equate the Vedic fire-altar with the *sunāri-kōtok* monument that a Kāfir hero with many kills and feasts had the right to construct at a place visible from the village: it was 'man-high and made of stones piled upon one another' (Klimburg 1986: 127, of the Ashkun Kāfirs; for a photograph of such a monument in another part of Kāfiristan, at Bomboret, Chitral, taken in 1895, see Edelberg and Jones 1979: 47, photo 24). Certainly both had the same function, to exhibit and exalt the rank of the builder (the fame and title resulting from the piling of a fire altar has been a most important reason for its survival in Kerala to our days; cf. Staal 1983).

The Vedic fire-altar is usually built in the shape of an eagle (*śyena*) of 10,800 bricks laid in five layers (Fig. 26). According to the Vedic texts, one who desires heaven (i.e. to get a heavenly abode after death) should build a fire altar in the shape of an eagle, which is the best flier among the birds: becoming an eagle, he flies to the heavenly world (cf. TS 5,4,11,1). It can thus be compared to the peacock, which is depicted as carrying horizontally represented people in its stomach to the stars on the funerary urns



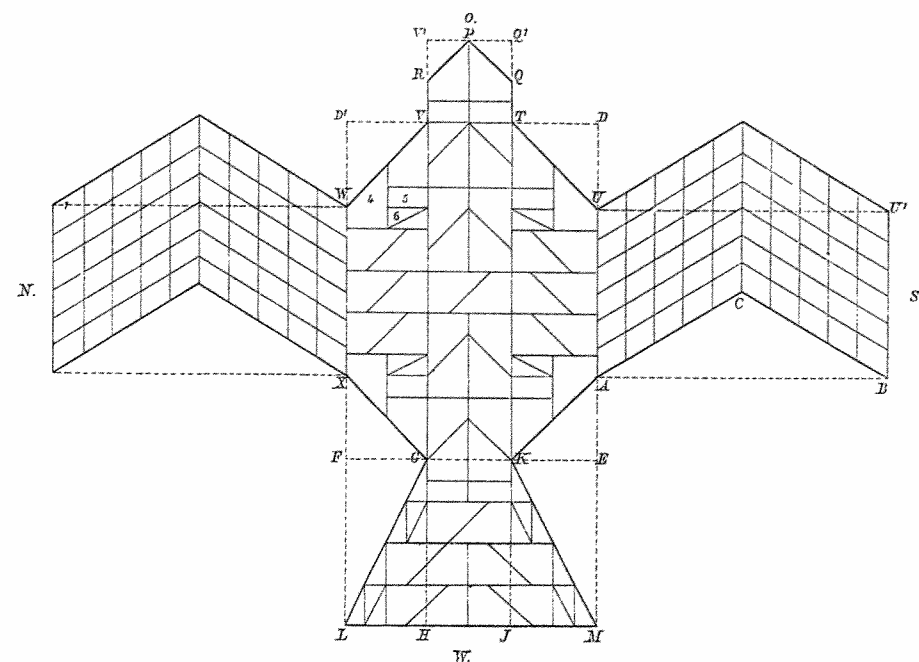


Fig. 26: The hawk-shaped fire-altar (*śyena-citi*) according to the Āpastamba-Śulbasūtra (after Thibaut 1875: Fig. 11).

of Cemetery-H at Harappa; the Cemetery-H people inherited the peacock as a sacred bird from the Harappans, in whose painted pottery it is often depicted, but never as a soul-carrier in this manner. The basic shape of the Vedic fire altar is rectangular like that of the funeral monument, but the head, tail and the wings are added to the four sides; this seems to be a development of the stepped cross, which is one of the basic shapes of the BMAC seals as well as ground plans of the stūpas in Central Asia and elsewhere (cf. section 3.3).

That the Vedic *śyena-citi*, like the Kāfir monument of piled stones, was also associated with successful warfare, is suggested by the fact that *śyena* is the name of a battle array (*vyūha*) of soldiers in the Mahābhārata (cf. Brockington 1998: 186f). It is associated with the Vrātyas, because warriors called vrātīna may perform a sorcery rite called *śyena* to overcome an enemy, *śyena* being here specified as the swiftest bird of prey; the main sources of this rite are Sāmavedic (ŚB 3,8; LŚS 8,5,1-17), but generally sorcery rituals like this are Atharvavedic.

Various birds, but especially the eagle, are among the most frequently occurring motifs of the BMAC seals (cf. Fig. 27 and Sarianidi 1998b): 'The striking abundance of the bird of prey in the Oxus Civilization representations has no equivalent elsewhere' (Francfort 1994: 408).

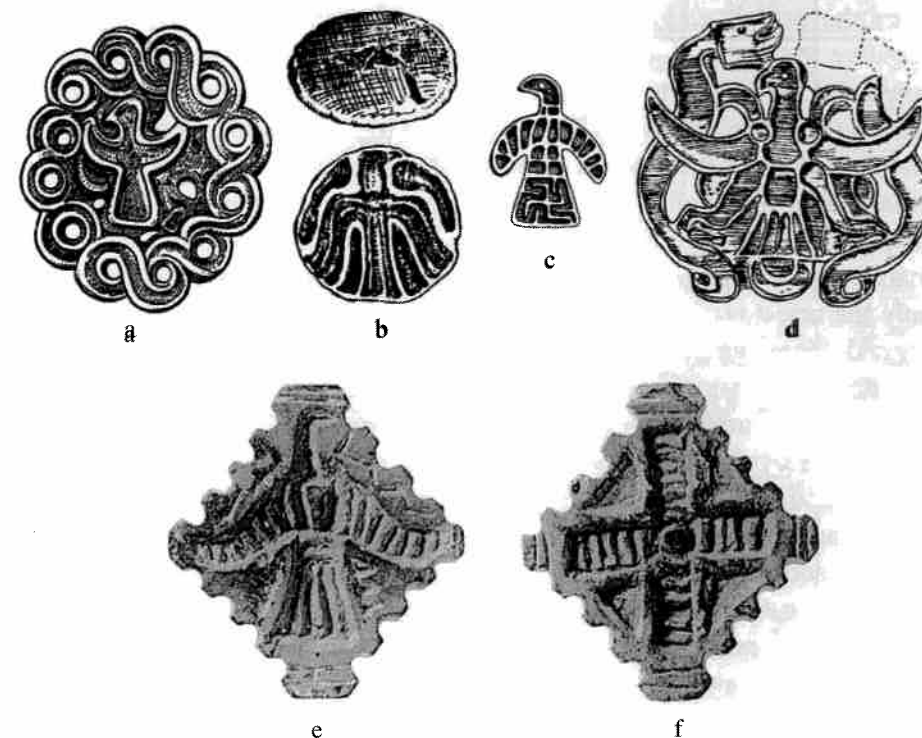


Fig. 27. Samples of the 'eagle' seals of the BMAC (after Baghestani 1998): no. 422 from Dashly-3 (a), no. 413 from Sapalli-tepa (b), no. 22 from the Ordos region in China (c), no. 629 from 'northern Afghanistan' (d), and (after CISI I: 205 no. H-166) from Harappa: obverse (e) and reverse (f).

In the BMAC seals, including one discovered at Harappa (Fig. 27e), the eagle is often associated with the snake, and therefore most probably depicts the snake eagle that mainly feeds on reptiles. This suggests connection with the Middle Vedic and epic Suparṇādhyaṃya, which tells about the enmity between the snakes and the eagles in connection with a wager theme. The 'eagle and snake' part of the BMAC and Suparṇādhyaṃya myth



is likely to be of ancient Near Eastern origin, related to the Arabic stories of Sindbad the sailor and the giant *rokh* bird (cf. Charpentier 1920-22: 349-366) and their source, the Sumerian legend of Etana about the strife between the eagle and the snake and King Etana's ascent to heaven on the eagle's back to fetch the tree of birth (cf. Knipe 1967: 340-350).

The eagle had an important position in the Kāfir religion as well, and even the present-day art of the region (cf. Cammann 1957) seems to preserve the 'eagle' motif of the BMAC seals and art. When the Afghans converted the Kāfirs to Islam by force in 1896, their commander-in-chief sent to the Amir in Kābul '20 golden birds and 10 golden idols' which he had looted from the shrines of Kāfiristān. The oral tradition of Waigal village tells of a god who in reply to the prayers of the people took the shape of a very large bird and killed the local demon, who had eaten one man from the village every year. A shrine was built for this golden bird; only the priest was allowed to open its door (cf. Jones 1986: 116).

In the iconography of the BMAC (cf. Fig. 25) as well as the Mitanni kingdom of Syria (cf. Fig. 28), a centrally important figure is also an anthropomorphic deity or hero with the head and/or the wings of an eagle. This figure can be traced back to the roots of the Trans-Elamite art of the BMAC and Iran, for it appears on one of the earliest post-Proto-Elamite seals from Susa, dated c. 2400 BC (cf. Fig. 29). As the BMAC art has several motifs traceable to Syria and Egypt as well, the Egyptian tradition of depicting the king as the falcon-headed Horus is likely to have reinforced the importance of this symbolic figure, who on the seal of the Mitanni king Sauštattar (Fig. 28) may well represent the royal seal owner himself.

The great popularity of the eagle motif in the BMAC art even after the supposed Aryan takeover suggests that this symbol reflects important Aryan and Indo-European conceptions as well, and not only local conventions of Near Eastern origin.

In the Ṛgveda and the Brāhmaṇas, the eagle (*śyena*) called Suparṇā 'having beautiful feathers' fetched the Soma from heaven; it was shot by the guardian of the nectar, the 'footless archer' Kṛṣṇānu, and this caused a 'feather' (*parṇā-*) fall on earth, where it became the 'blade' (*parṇa-*) of the Soma plant, or the essence of Soma in the *parṇa* tree (*Butea frondosa*), a branch of which is to be used for driving off calves (cf. RV 4,26-27; MS 4,1,1; ŚB 1,7,1,1; Charpentier 1920-22: 125ff.; Knipe 1967: 328f). In several variants of this myth, the eagle *śyena* of this story is compared to

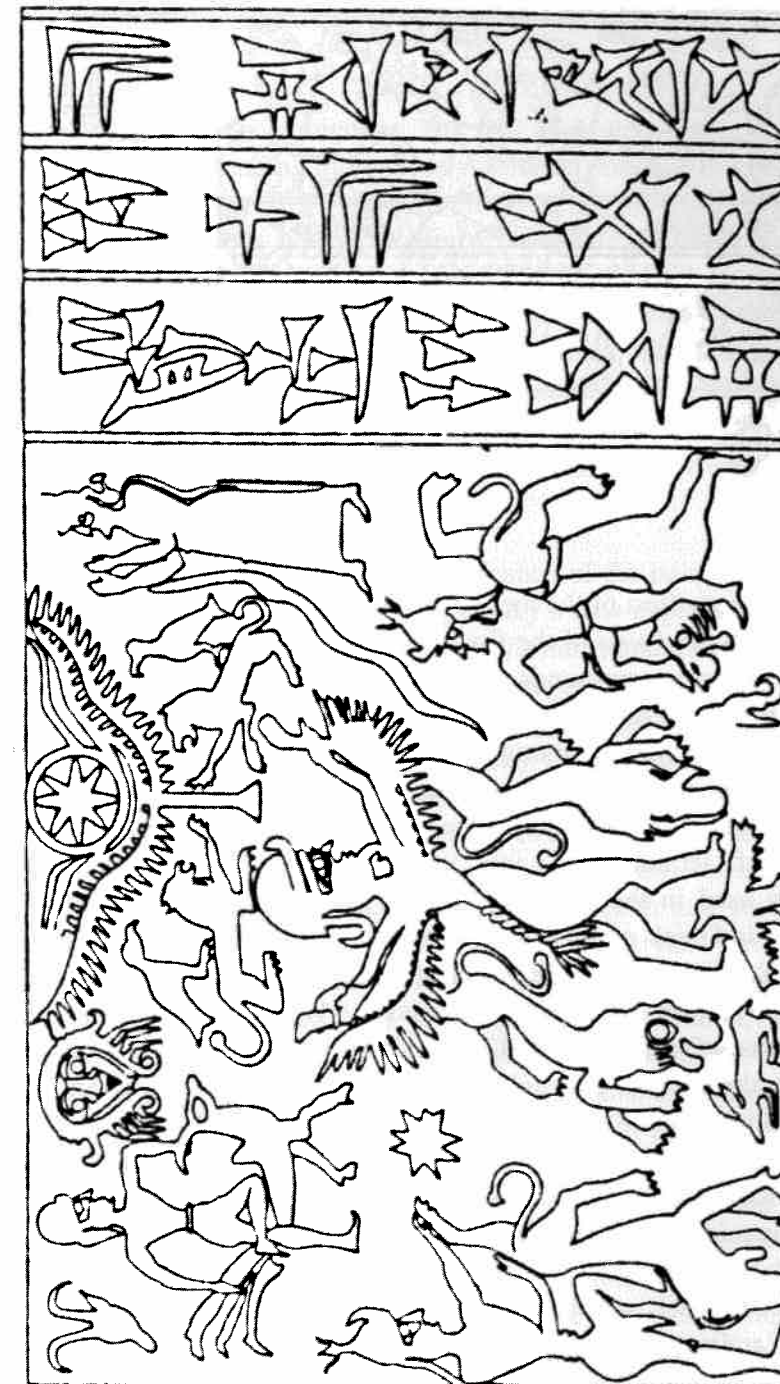


Fig. 28. Impression of the seal of the Mitanni king Sauštattar (= Old Indo-Aryan \*Savyasāhitar- 'chariot-warrior', literally 'he who stands on the left [of the charioteer]', cf. Parpola, in press a, section 2.8.2, c. 1420 BC (after Stein 1994; Fig. 2).

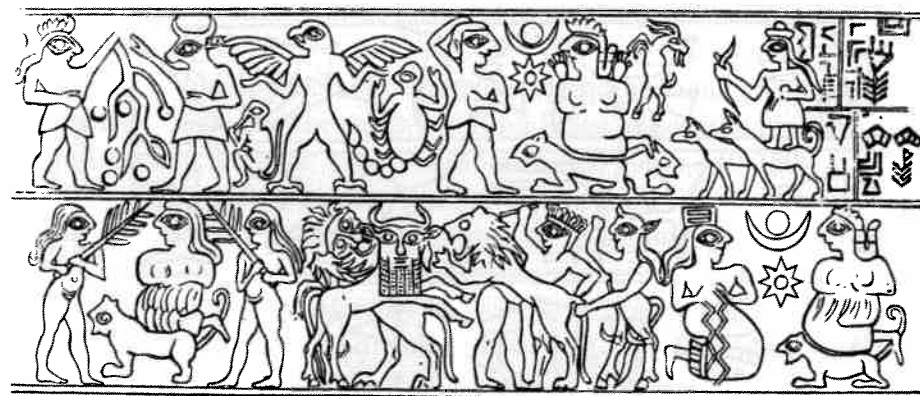


Fig. 29. Impression of an Elamite cylinder seal from Susa, dating from the last phase of the Early Dynastic Period, c. 2400 BC (after Amiet 1986: Fig. 71).

the Gāyatrī, the swiftest of the metres of poetry, and this same comparison connects it with the *śyena* of the fire altar (cf. MS 3,4,7).

Sanskrit *suparṇa* corresponds to Avestan *huparəna*; in Yašt 13,70, this is the epithet of the Fravasis, the guardian spirits (cf. Knipe 1967: 331, n. 23). In southern Nuristan among the Ashkun Kāfirs, an eagle defended Indra's wine garden in Wama: when enemies tried to take possession of the garden and shot the bird, they were killed by a lavine of stones that fell upon them (cf. Jettmar 1975: 90). Wine (in Sanskrit *mādhu* [which is occasionally used in the R̥gveda of Soma in this eagle myth, cf. Kuhn 1859: 159f], in Greek μέθυ) is among the Greeks too the successor of the Proto-Indo-European cultic drink mead made of honey (PIE *\*medhu*). According to Moiro (quoted by Athenaios 11), a great eagle brought nectar to Zeus (cf. Kuhn 1859: 178); in the north Germanic mythology, God Odin in the guise of the eagle carries off the mead of a giant (Snorri's Edda quoted in Kuhn 1859: 148-150 and Knipe 1967: 338).

Adalbert Kuhn (1859: 137, 146, 162f, 192f) has suggested that the eagle Suparṇa is the thunderbird and the nectar that he brings down from heaven is the rain water, and the tree falling down to earth as his feather is the thunderbolt. This is in agreement with the Avestan hymn to the god of victory in Yašt 14,41, which Hanns-Peter Schmidt (1980: 5) translates as follows: 'Vərəθraγna wraps fortune [*xvarənah*] round this house for wealth in cattle, as that great bird Saēna [= Sanskrit *śyena*], as those

watery clouds hit (sprinkle, cover) the great mountains'. Schmidt comments:

The sentence is ambiguous. The first comparative clause can be construed as belonging more closely with the principal clause or with the second comparative clause. In the first case the bird Saēna would be understood as a typical bringer of *xvarənah*. In the second case the size of the bird would be referred to: he covers, overshadows the mountains like the rainclouds. The poet may have toyed with both possibilities and made further associations. We shall see later that Sēnmurw has close relations to the *xvarənah* (§9. 10. 12. 21. 23) as well as to the production of rain (§4). He is thus involved in the fortune of man and the fertility of the world which depends on rain (Schmidt 1980: 5).

It is possible to grasp the full significance of the *parṇa* dropped by the eagle Suparṇa only in the light of Lubotsky's new explanation of Avestan *xvarənah* as a borrowing from Scythian *farnah*-, taken over at the end of the 8th century when the Scythians were ruling in Media. Ossetic, a descendant of ancient Scythian, is the only Iranian dialect, where initial *\*p-* before a vowel has regularly become *f-*; the word survives in Ossetic as *farn* 'happiness, peace, prosperity'. The most frequent formula containing the word *xvarənah* in Avestan, *raiiia xvarənaḡhaca* 'on account of (his) wealth and fortune', which occurs hundreds of times, corresponds to the R̥gvedic formula *rāyā páriṇasā* 'with (your) wealth and sovereignty (or military might)'. This shows that the Proto-Aryan form has been *\*parHnas-* < Proto-Indo-European *\*pelH<sub>1</sub>-nos-* (from the root *\*pelH<sub>1</sub>* 'to fill'), originally meaning 'full property, omni-possession, sovereignty, dominion, control over a territory', and also 'abundance'. For the last mentioned meaning, compare the compound *gópariṇas-*, 'which at least in [RV] 8.45.24 means something like "abundance of milk"' (see Lubotsky 1998).

According to the Suparṇa legend, the eagle *śyena*- fetching Soma from heaven drops *parṇa*-, which is very close to 'the expected Iranian reflex...*\*parnah*- with loss of the laryngeal in inlaut' in Lubotsky's reconstruction (1998: 483). We have seen that the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa connects *parṇa*- with something like *gópariṇas-*: the branch of the *parṇa* tree is expected to provide vigour and life juice, and protect the calves from

robbers and predators (cf. the mantra in *Vājasaneyi-Samhitā* 1,1 muttered on the branch; and Kuhn 1859: 180f).

In the Vedic ritual of the funerary monument, before the grave is filled with gravel, the dead is given food in the form of five or nine cakes. According to the *Kauśikasūtra* (86,6), these are covered with *palāśa* (=parṇa) blades, muttering this mantra: 'King Parṇa is the cover of the dishes; the strength of refreshment, the power, vigor hath come to us, dispensing life-time to the living, in order to length of life for a hundred autumns' (AV 18,4,53, transl. Whitney 1905/II: 885, but substituting 'Parṇa' for 'leaf' with Caland 1896: 159). Here *parṇa* that has fallen down from heaven as the feather of the nectar-bringing eagle has the function of reviving the dead.

In the Old Iranian religion, *xvarənah* is above all known as the 'halo of glory and fortune' that falls from heaven and surrounds the head of heroes and legitimate kings. As shown by Lubotsky (1998), the word *xvarənah* comes from the Scythians, and corresponds to Sanskrit *parṇa* 'feather, leaf', which word is used of the feather falling down from the eagle *Suparṇa*. Thus there might be an ancient 'Scythian' (Dāsa) background in the custom of the Kāfir to mark each kill they had made with a crest feather of the pheasant in their dancing headdress (cf. Klimburg 1986: 126; Robertson 1896: 524). Ancient Iranian rulers, like the Egyptian Horus kings, also wore falcon crowns (cf. Stricker 1963-64).

#### 4.7. The Vedic fire altar and the chariot wheel

Besides the prevalent eagle- or hawk-shaped fire-altars there are other, obsolete alternatives faithfully described in the Vedic ritual handbooks. Most significant among these is the *rathacakra* shape, present in several varieties, with and without spokes (cf. Fig. 30 and e.g. *Baudhāyana-Śulbasūtra* 3,89-107).

The groundplan of the early stūpas at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa in eastern India likewise represents the chariot-wheel. According to the *Mahā-Parinibbāna-Sutta* (5,25-26), the remains of the Tathāgata were to be treated 'as men treat the remains of a *cakkavatti rājā*', which *inter alia* involves erecting a *thūpa* at the crossing of four roads. The imperial title *cakravartin* implies 'turning the wheel' of the chariot for victory (the Buddha as the spiritual emperor does this in his *dharma-cakra-pravartana*): in the Vedic *vājapeya* ritual, which is of preclassical origin, the sacrificing

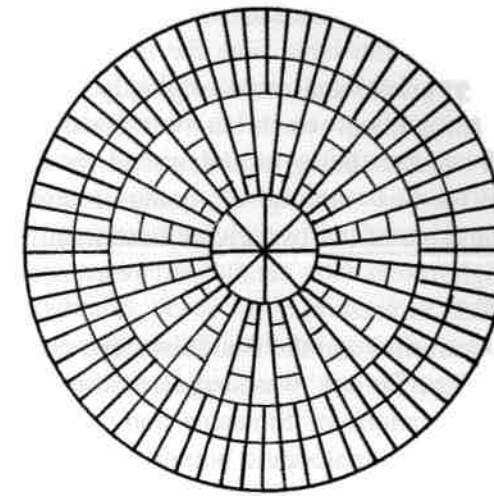


Fig. 30. A variant of the Vedic fire-altar in the shape of the chariot wheel (*ratha-cakra*) with spokes (1st, 3rd and 5th layer) (after Thibaut in Sen and Bag 1983: Fig. 62).

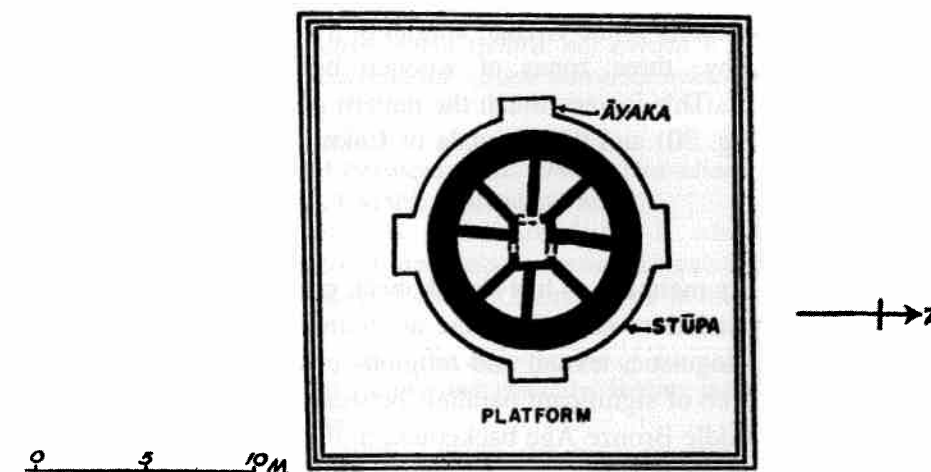


Fig. 31. The wheel-shaped groundplan of the early stūpas at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa in Andhra Pradesh (after Mitra 1971: 29).

king wins a chariot race, going once around the turning pillar at the other end of the race course; at the same time the Brahman priest (who represents the king's house priest, and more originally his charioteer and co-ruler) sits upon a chariot-wheel which has been fixed on the top of a vertical axle-pillar and which is being turned around for the sake of victory. The ultimate model for this 'turning' or 'going around' seems to be the daily cosmic chariot drive of the two divine horsemen, who represent the day/sun and the night/moon (for details and references, see Parpola in press a, section 2.10.2; in press b).

That the Vedic burial rites and the Buddhist stūpa continue the tradition of 'tumuli in Bronze Age Europe' was suggested already by Stuart Piggott (1950: 285). The excavations of Sintashta and Arkaim in the southern Urals have brought to light aristocratic burials in all likelihood representing the 'Proto-Aryan' culture in which the deceased is placed in a spoke-wheeled chariot along with his weapons, horses and groom or charioteer (cf. Fig. 3). Even the ground-plan of the 'towns' of this culture seems to represent the chariot-wheel (cf. Fig. 20). As we have seen (in section 3.7.2), Karl Jettmar (1981: 227) has pointed out that the Dashly-3 'temple-fort' with its nine towers in the innermost circular rampart (cf. Fig. 19) resembles the Kāfir myths connected with the fortress of Goddess Disani with seven streets radiating from it into different directions, or provided with 'nine gates of mercy', and that this ground-plan has a parallel at 'Koy-Krylgan-Kala, evidently a combination of necropolis and ceremonial centre'. Jettmar also refers to the Arzhan kurgan of Tuva (c. 900 BC), 'a burial surrounded by...three zones of wooden buildings arranged in a radiating lay-out'. This is very much the pattern of the Vedic *rathacakra* fire-altars (cf. Fig. 30) and the maṇḍala of Cakra-Śambara (cf. Fig. 18).

## 5. Conclusion

A summary of my main theses has already been given in sections 1 and 2. Here I would just like to note that there are numerous specific details of archaeological, linguistic, textual and religious evidence which converge to form a tight web of significant parallels between the Scythian/Saka tradition and its Middle Bronze Age background in the Eurasiatic steppes, the early urban phase of the 'Bactria and Margiana Archaeological Complex', the Dāsas of the Ṛgveda, the 'Kāfirs' of Nūristān, the Vrātyas rituals of the Veda with their early Magadhan background, and the Śākta Tantric

tradition of Hinduism and Vajrayāna Buddhism. The historical reconstruction offered here provides adequate explanations of many phenomena which, considered in isolation, have remained poorly understood. The reconstruction may therefore be taken as an approximation of what really happened, until a better one is put forward or new facts requiring its revision come up. In conclusion, I should indeed like to stress that, even if here and there perhaps presented with little reservation, this is nothing but a provisional and incomplete sketch, an attempt at a holistic understanding of the data. It undoubtedly needs to be critically examined, corrected and completed in many ways, and I shall be grateful for any comments and suggestions that the readers of this paper are willing to bring to my notice.

## Abbreviations

- ANASA: Bronkhorst, J. and Deshpande, M. M., eds. 1999. *Aryan and non-Aryan in South Asia: Evidence, interpretation and ideology*. Cambridge: Harvard Oriental Series, Opera Minora 3.
- BAEIA: Mair, V., ed. 1998. *The Bronze Age and Early Iron Age peoples of eastern Central Asia*, I. Washington: Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph 26.
- CDIAL: Turner, R.L. 1966. *A comparative dictionary of the Indo-Aryan languages*. London: Oxford University Press.
- CISI I: Joshi, J.P. and Parpola, A. 1987. *Corpus of Indus seals and inscriptions, I: Collections in India*. Helsinki: Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae B 239.
- CSCE: Zdanovich, D. G., Ivanova, N. O. and Predeina, I. V., eds. 1999. *Kompleksnye obshchestva tsentral'noj Evrazii v III-I tys. do n. é.: Regional'nye osobennosti v svete universal'nykh modelej / Complex societies of central Eurasia: Regional specifics in the light of global models*. Chelyabinsk.
- DEDR: Burrow, T. and Emeneau, M.B. 1984. *A Dravidian etymological dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- ECUI-E: Carpelan, C., Parpola, A. and Koskikallio, P., eds. 2001. *Early contacts between Uralic and Indo-European: Linguistic and archaeological considerations*. Helsinki: Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne 242.
- I-AASA: Erdosy, G., ed. 1995. *The Indo-Aryans of ancient South Asia: Language, material culture and ethnicity*. Berlin: Indian philology and South Asian studies 1.
- LIV: Rix, H. et al. 1998. *Lexicon der indogermanischen Verben: Die Wurzeln und ihre Primärstammbildungen*. Wiesbaden.
- NPCB-P: Kadrow, S., Klochko, V. I., Koško, A., Pustovalov, S. Z., Ras-samakin, Yu. Y., and Videiko, M. Y. 1994. *Nomadism and pastoral-*



- ism in the circle of Baltic-Pontic early agrarian cultures: 5000-1650 BC. Poznań: Baltic-Pontic Studies 2.
- RHK 1: Jettmar, K. 1986. *The religions of the Hindukush 1: The religion of the Kafirs: The pre-Islamic heritage of Afghan Nuristan*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- SAA 1993: Parpola, A. and Koskikallio, P., eds. 1994. *South Asian Archaeology 1993, I-II*. Helsinki: Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae B 271.
- SKI: Meid, W., ed. 1998. *Sprache und Kultur der Indogermanen: Akten der X. Fachtagung der Indogermanischen Gesellschaft, Innsbruck, 22.-28. September 1996*. Innsbruck: Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft 93.

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